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Both/And Anti-Racism Homiletics:
Addressing the Dual Oppressor/Co-Conspirator Reality of 21st Century White Preachers
Working to Interrupt and Dismantle Racism with Preaching

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Abstract

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This discursive analysis of anti-racism homiletics written by white homiliticians set out to discover precursors to any racism perpetrated within them. Pre-analysis assumptions regarding possible causation included a heightened commitment to excusing white people's racism, an avoidance to naming racism directly or as sin, or an inflated priority to comfort white people. These assumptions were challenged when racism persisted despite a homiletic's insistence to equate racism with sin, call out white people's pseudo-repentance language or efforts, or name white people's responsibility to fight against racism. Present, however, in each source analyzed, was the philosophical tautology, "white people are good." This, plus the linguistic and theological gymnastics required to protect white people's goodness at all costs, resulted in racism perpetrated via multiple expressions despite the anti-racism moniker attached to the homiletic.

Naming something "anti-racism" is not enough to avoid perpetrating racism. What is needed is an anti-racist anti-racism model which can disrupt, dismantle, and destroy racism in content and process. For this to occur, the dual nature of white people who are *both* prioritized, privileged, and protected within the system of racism *and* committed to dismantling it must be highlighted. White preachers committed to dismantle racism through the act of preaching need a "Both/And" Anti-Racism Homiletic.

All preaching betrays the theology which founds it. Thus, this project constructs an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology which reclaims guilt and shame as theological goods that God uses as anthropological course correctors to bring white people back to our humanness. Further, a "both/and" racial positionality highlights the need for a "both/and" form of catalyst grace simultaneously unconditional and conditional. As a bridge between theology and homiletics stands pedagogy. An Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Pedagogy uses the "both/and" racial positionality of white people to nuance Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed into a Pedagogy of the Oppressor. On the other side of the pedagogical bridge stands a "Both/And" Anti-Racism Homiletic grounded in Naming, Challenge, Repentance, and Hope.

Limits in scope create future opportunities for projects including but not limited to a full-length "Both/And" Anti-Racism Theology, a full-length "Both/And" Anti-Racism Pedagogy, or a practical course on how to teach the "Both/And" Anti-Racism Homiletic Model.

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INTRODUCTION

PROBLEM

White preaching is homiletic content or proclamation, created using the assumptions and logic system of white supremacy, which reproduces and generates racism. Without intentional interruption, white preaching colonizes white people; conscripting us to live voluntarily beholden to whiteness. Whiteness, a jealous god, proselytizes his followers to believe protection for those of us racialized as white has been divinely sanctioned. White homiletics serves as demigod whose job it is to ground white preaching in white supremacist tautologies and methodologies. White preaching, then, serves as archangel; deputized to create an unrelenting and adaptable grid of racist ideologies and expressions meant to sound just enough like the Good News to sustain the status quo.

In every decade, “well-meaning” white Christians are shocked to realize that the United States is racist; though the United States has, from its birth, been built on the backs of BIPAL people.¹ The first Euro-Christian land stealers lured Native Peoples into their web of deceit and swiftly went to work destroying their bodies and kidnapping their land. Christians newly racialized as white justified the “purchasing” and terrorizing of African people with claims of God’s design and white superiority. White Christians were not exempt from perpetuating the Whitelash after Reconstruction which endorsed or accepted Jim and Jane Crow laws crafted specifically to dehumanize, torture, and lynch

¹ “Many articles reference People of Color (PoC) or Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) to avoid centering whiteness when describing racial identity. The Reverend Sheila M. Beckford uses the term BIPAL (Black, Indigenous, Pacific-Islanders, Asian, Latino/x) to represent multiple racial identities by naming them separately to further decenter whiteness in discussions of anti-racism and beyond.” Sheila M. Beckford and E. Michelle Ledder, “footnote 2,” *Anti-Racism 4REALS: Real Talk with Real Strategies in Real Time for Real Change* (Saint Louis: Chalice Press, 2021), 4.

BIPAL people, especially Black people. Following the Civil Rights Act, “nice” white Christians deferred to the “polite” racism of colorblindness and post-racialism while allowing racial genocide to happen in front of our screens and very own eyes. Since 2016, white Christians have more and more publicly unleashed unrelenting waves of narcissistic demands to supply our every economic and emotional need. Since 2020, “woke” white Christians simultaneously protest the police murders of Black and Brown people and indignantly deny perpetrating our socially progressive racism. In every generation, white Christians have orchestrated, participated in, or fell silent as racism privileges us and ravages the bodies, minds, and spirits of BIPAL people. If white preaching was able to dismantle racism – it would have done so already. It has not.

White preachers don’t need another diversity homiletic; we need an anti-racism homiletic: a homiletic that in both theory and practice provides opportunities and capabilities for the work of anti-racism. The term anti-racism assumes as true the phenomenon of racism to survive and thrive in environments without intentional and explicit actions and actors capable of disrupting, dismantling, and destroying it. Racism will not surrender under the weak mews of gradual change beholden to the timeline of those who are racially protected. Rather, such efforts fortify racism – leaving it to relish in its ability to bathe in the tepid waters of compromise and consciences comfortable with accepting the suffering of others as collateral damage. Racism harms us all; marching BIPAL people toward their deaths and dehumanizing people racialized as white. The academy and the Church need an anti-racism homiletic capable of confronting, reforming, and revolutionizing white preaching. White homiletics and its preachers must repent for the ways in which we have kidnapped, raped, and tortured the Good News of

the Gospel to serve the god of whiteness. Then, finally, liberated from its sins of compliance, silence, and the status quo of white supremacy, white preaching will finally be capable of providing white people a liberating option *from* the god of whiteness and *for* the work of anti-racism.

One might think, as I had, that a homiletic specifically crafted to do the work of anti-racism in both preaching and the teaching of preaching, in the pulpit and the pew, and in mind, heart, and spirit would achieve its intrinsically named goal. Yet, often, anti-racism homiletics written by white homiliticians replicate racism and its dangerous consequences. Rather than disrupt and dismantle racism, these homiletics reinforce racism in deeply insidious ways. For example, a white preacher who reads these preaching books with a commitment to putting their intentions for anti-racism to action, unwittingly finds within its pages expressions of racism disguised as anti-racism. Racism, encoded with theological-sounding talk and a distorted hint of anti-racism, is free to deploy an ever-widening company of soldiers to weaponize the Good News of the Gospel. Rather than white preachers resisting its spread, many become its most faithful disciples.

With a dialogical analysis of the methods and methodologies of the current anti-racism homiletics written by white homiliticians, one idea presents in all of them as if it is a truth which cannot be challenged nor disputed. The philosophical tautology, “white people are good,” is protected at all costs and this is where the racism within white anti-racism homiletics generatively unfolds. In the theological and linguistic gymnastics necessary to preserve the ideology and worldview that “white people are good” each white anti-racism homiletic creates and defends additional expressions of racism. Thus, within anti-racism

homiletics there emerges a set of racist ideas, tropes, practices, and mandates which serve to protect white people's notions of our goodness. Herein lies the problem: as long as the philosophical tautology of "white people are good" remains, no anti-racism homiletic can do the work of anti-racism and, thus, be a true anti-racist, anti-racism homiletic.

QUESTIONING "WHITE PEOPLE ARE GOOD" AS STARTING POINT

For the past five (5) years, I have worked for the General Commission on Religion and Race, the global agency of the United Methodist Church set apart to dismantle racism, at all levels within the denomination. My focus area is Institutional Equity, within which the agency's anti-racism work resides. I, like other white anti-racism trainers, am always trying to figure out the balance between faithfulness – telling the truth about racism and racial justice – and effectiveness – what will move white people to join the work to eradicate racism and enact racial justice. Some of the prevalent methods and assumptions fall into the following four categories:

1. The binary between "racism = bad" and "not being racist = good" is a destructive one because it avoids the realities of systemic racism, hinders white people who consider ourselves good from seeing our participation in racism, and absolves us from racism as long as we do not use racial slurs or have active disdain for BIPAL people.²
2. White fragility is real and needs to be taken seriously. The term, white fragility, made prolific after being published and incorrectly accredited to white sociologist

² In a GCORR video, "Deconstructing White Privilege," Robin DiAngelo names this phenomenon and strategy. Robin DiAngelo, though, uses the term, "People of Color." Robin DiAngelo, "Deconstructing White Privilege with Dr. Robin DiAngelo – You Tube," *gcorr.org*, accessed October 15, 2021, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwIx3KQer54>.

Robin DiAngelo, describes a horizon of discomfort white people feel when we engage in discussions about race and racism. Our discomfort results in a number of predictable emotions and actions including but not limited to lashing out in anger, frustration, weeping, silence, retreating, or leaving the space all together.

3. Building relationships is the best way to build up enough trust to enter into these conversations without going over the white fragility line. In this way, the conversations can continue without those of us who are white “shutting down;” no longer engaging the material or the trainer because we are too hurt, too angry, too scared, or too overwhelmed to do so.
4. Always remember that the people, themselves, are good. Participating in racism is a bad action. However, there is a difference between what we do and who we are.

The teaching implications of these include but are not limited to the following:

1. We meet people where they are not where we want them to be.
2. We remind white people that racism is bad. People are good.
3. We create strategies that allow white people to come to conclusions versus a model where information is presented as truth to be accepted blindly.
4. We “call people in” to the work of anti-racism rather than “calling people out” on racism.³
5. We teach empathy – often starting with stories that do not center on racism.
6. We equate time with progress. We wade in slowly, we do not tell the truth all at one time, and we use metaphors like “journey” to allow those of us who are white to see

³ This is often attributed to SURJ: Showing Up for Racial Justice as this is their central anti-racism strategy. *surj.org*, <https://www.surj.org/about/our-values/>, accessed October 15, 2021.

ourselves on a continuum of racial consciousness and racial justice awareness/activism.

Especially for those of us who are white, the above methodological assumptions and strategies make sense. Most of why this is true for us stems from our insistence on the centrality of white people and our needs without requiring us to consider the outcomes or ongoing harm to BIPAL people. White people, and especially our goodness, counterintuitively become both the explicit focus and implicit priority. *Those of us who are white, then, engage in discussions about race, racism, and anti-racism as long as our feelings and goodness are protected well enough for us to do so.* As I think about this, however, I am left with a major ethical conundrum:

“When do we, as white people, forfeit our claim to being good?”

In other words, “How much racism do white people have to perpetrate before we can no longer be categorized as “good” people anymore?”

Maybe because I am an ordained person I think about racism as sin. In the Christian Church, many of us will claim that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).” We recognize that we do things that damage ourselves and others from becoming all that we have been created and called to be. This being so, several of us would also agree that God’s grace gives us the ability to be forgiven of sin, but that does not mean we just keep sinning because we can rely on God to keep forgiving us. In fact, many of us would claim the contrary. It is because we have been forgiven of sin, we work as hard as we

possibly can NOT to sin. Yet, somehow with racism it is different? If it is not, then what is the cut-off point?

How many times can we, as white people, deny racial bias, microaggressions, and systemic racism; insist colorblind ideologies and rugged individualism will “fix” racism; whitesplain racism to BIPAL people; and turn our faces away from the deadly consequences of racial terror while simultaneously benefiting from white supremacy – before we have no business claiming to be “good?” I am asking because the math baffles me.

I am a Christian minister. I believe that humanity can be saved from its worst self and that ALL people can be delivered from all that corrupts us to that which sustains all of us. Concomitantly, though, I am legitimately asking whether Aristotelian ethics is correct: is there not a point when our actions create our character, and our character defines the virtues by which we or others might describe us?⁴ If we cultivate virtues of goodness, we might cultivate a character of “good.” If we cultivate racist actions and ideologies – whether blatant or “polite” – how long can we claim “goodness?”

⁴ “With regard to the virtues in *general* we have stated their genus in outline, viz. that they are means and that they are states of character, and that they tend, and by their own nature, to the doing of the acts by which they are produced, and that they are in our power and voluntary, and act as the right rule prescribes. But actions and states of character are not voluntary in the same way; for we are masters of our actions from the beginning right to the end, if we know the particular facts, but though we control the beginning of our states of character the gradual progress is not obvious, any more than it is in illnesses; because it was in our power, however, to act in this way or not in this way, therefore the states are voluntary.” Aristotle, “Book III, chapter 5,” *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 974.

We might be able to point to the most heinous of acts and have some agreement about “crossing the line.” Where, though, is the place on the proverbial slippery slope where one crosses the line between knowing not and a hardened heart which refuses to bend despite the warnings, evidence, and consequences to self and others? Is there a tipping point⁵ of sorts when the transformation of our character from one set of traits to another occurs? Is there a symbolic or social point system by which our actions or inactions and their outcomes are tallied and attributed to our character by categories?

BIPAL people are dying while those of us who are white, snuggled up in our own false sense of “goodness,” deny or explain away evidence that is before us. Progressive white people – even those who have actively protested anti-Blackness racism and police murder of Black people since 2020 are not immune. We are the same white people who will protest one day and come back to work the next refusing to interrupt the racism our white boss perpetrates in the middle of their presentation. Then, we will want/demand exoneration from our BIPAL co-workers explaining to them – after the meeting – how flabbergasted we were about our boss’ racism and how we would have said something during the meeting, but it would have been rude. Those of us who are white wait to feel comfortable enough to act like we actually believe BIPAL people, to obey their leadership, and to address our racism and white fragility. Our racialized privilege has assumed and obliterated us to another; our unlimited access even to demanding we are considered “good” despite our persistence in denying, deflecting, or defending our racism. If we are

⁵ “The name given to that one dramatic moment in an epidemic when everything can change all at once is the Tipping Point.” Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 2000), 9.

ever to dismantle racism, this is another unearned racialized privilege which must be razed as well.

METHOD/OLOGIES & RESEARCH

Racialized Socio-Political Positionality: Who I Write and Why I am⁶

I intentionally live in racially multifaceted space. I am a Ph.D. student at Emory University where my work focuses on what it means to do the homiletic work of anti-racism with people racialized as white. I am employed by a global agency on religion and race which helps a mostly white, mainline Protestant denomination, live more fully into racial justice and equity. I am also an ordained Itinerant Elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. And I want to be clear. I am white.

I am a white, cis-gendered, heterosexual woman, born in 1969, with a mother who taught me as early as I can remember to speak truth to power – even when you are afraid and told to back down, to stand up for people being bullied – even when it doesn't directly affect you, and to always do the right thing – even when you are the only one. But she also implicitly taught me that racial tensions, oppression, and injustice would all be solved if only we were colorblind. If only we didn't see color anymore and just saw people, we would do what was right and be the good people we should be. And I totally believed it. Because I could. Because I'm white.

⁶ The first four paragraphs, save a few words, were originally written September 2016 and posted on emledder.com in "[An Open Letter to My Fellow U.S. White Christians: A Confession, A Challenge, and A Concrete Plan.](#)" This website address is now defunct.

For a long time, because of the way individual and communal white segregation works, I did not have close enough friendships with Black- and Brown-bodied people to hear their stories of different racialized experiences. After high school, my group of friends grew more diverse, my experiences of racial diversity widened, and I paid attention to the stories told around me. And what I started to learn from my friends, from the music to which I listened, and the books I was reading was a very different American experience existed for people who were not racialized as white. I began to ask questions and took seriously the answers I was graciously offered. I was confronted experientially, academically, culturally, and literarily about my own participation in racism and watched both BIPAL mentors and those racialized as white resist racism while modeling it for anyone aware enough and willing to pay attention.

My childhood training to speak truth to power, to stand up for people being bullied, and to do the right thing started to kick in, now focused on issues related to race. I began to realize that my individual belief system and even my words were not enough, that my actions, and eventually the way I lived my life, must willingly and intentionally take the level of risk necessary to change a system of oppression – even as I learn more and more how I benefit from that oppression. For over thirty years, and as part of an ongoing journey, I am increasingly learning what it means to be white, how to pay sacred attention to and to clearly hear the voices of Black- and Brown-bodied people, and the risks it takes to stand with both feet fully in my whiteness and fully in my deliberate choice to disrupt, dismantle, and destroy racism. My existential hope and embodied prayer are that I am living into increasingly honorable manifestations of an anti-racist life. I am a disciple of Jesus the Christ who came to liberate all without reserve and to create a kin-dom where

lions and lambs can be the best of friends after they create and live into an equity model that disrupts and repairs the unjust power differential into which they were born.

However, despite the awareness I have experienced personally or the work I do academically and vocationally, there is no connecting point between my whiteness and anti-racism work that does not occur without an external intervention of some sort. I did not create anti-racism knowledge, strategies, or skill sets from my own whiteness. I did not wake up one day and, from my own socialization as a white person, have a number of “a-ha” moments that developed into an anti-racist mindset. As a white person it is impossible to jump from the logic system of racism which protects, prioritizes, and privileges me to the logic system of anti-racism without some sort of interruption. White segregation and systemic racism allow me to live my whole life, experiencing thriving and exponential success, without ever having to prove knowledge of or valuing the wisdom, work, or leadership of BIPAL people. I can get admitted to colleges and earn degrees without having to show evidential awareness of BIPAL scholars. I can be selected for jobs and promoted without having any anti-racism skills or experience – even diversity, equity, and inclusion jobs. Moreover, when I experience hardship, it is not due to or exacerbated by racism, thus I have never had to overcome racism (anti-racism) to overcome hardship. For me to do the work of anti-racism, the knowledge and skills must externally come.

So also do my methodological assumptions which undergird the knowledge or skill sets I list or construct in this project. Everything I have learned about racism and anti-racism stems from something shared or taught indirectly or directly by BIPAL people. In addition

to BIPAL scholars cited explicitly, stories and testimonies and anecdotes and Facebook Live videos and music and sermons and more, authored by BIPAL people, have infused and informed my thought process and worldview. The people within my Metropolitan AME family in Washington DC, with whom I have worshipped, celebrated, mourned, protested, and joked around inhabit my heart and soul as I attempt to translate their truths into that which will create honorable ways for white people to do our work to dismantle racism. There are particular stories of racialized terror, of anguished wrestling with how to balance resisting racism and resisting ceding to white demands for comfort, and of Black brilliance unrewarded or stolen that reverberate in my mind as I attempt to write about what it will take for those of us who are white to live as anti-racists. Anything I have constructed has been based in the anti-racism knowledge of BIPAL people shaped by my thinking as a white person hopefully creating a translation bridge capable of teaching white people our roles in this work.

Additional Assumptions, Definitions, and Interpretive Frameworks

- **Race:** a social construction of categories which creates a hierarchy of distributed resources, access to opportunities, privilege-based power, and assumption of trust among different groups of people; based on categories which change over time; dependent upon the ideas and ideologies of those who currently hold systemic and institutional power.
- **Racism:** a system of culturally sanctioned beliefs, and the unjust structures of power created by them, that benefits one race to the disadvantage and devastation of others; in the United States, racism is a historically rooted system of power, infused in biases, policies, institutions, and laws which benefit people racialized as

white, reinforces the normalcy, authority, and “rightness” of whiteness,⁷ and routinely produces unjust outcomes for BIPAL people; while individuals can reinforce racist systems with personal prejudices, biases, and obliviousness (blind-spots) based in race, the term “racism” describes the systems produced and sustained when racial bias and prejudices are backed with systemic institutionalized power.⁸

- **Anti-Racism:** the explicit work of recognizing, interrupting, and dismantling racism wherever and in whatever form it exists; implicitly and explicitly different than intercultural competency, which builds our capacity to learn about and honor cultures in addition to our own; anti-racism seeks only to understand racism for the purpose of dismantling it.⁹
- **Anti-Racist:**
 - (noun): the person or thing doing the work of anti-racism.
 - (adjective): describes the entity doing the work of anti-racism.
- **White Preaching:** preaching which accommodates, sustains, or protects white supremacy and the system of racism either actively or inactively, verbally or non-verbally, explicitly or implicitly, intentionally or unintentionally; created and/or proclaimed by people racialized as white or BIPAL people who perpetuate the tenets of white supremacy and the system of racism either by internalized racism

⁷ I first heard this term watching a TEDx Talk entitled, “Immaculate Perception,” a lecture about Implicit Bias. Jerry Kang, “Immaculate Perception: Jerry Kang at TEDxSanDiego 2013 – YouTube,” *You Tube*, accessed October 15, 2021, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9VGbwNI6Ssk>.

⁸ I crafted the wording of this definition for an online glossary for GCORR which has not yet been made public as of Sept. 8, 2019.

⁹ I wrote a paraphrase of this definition in May 2018 for a “Resisting Racism” curriculum designed for and used by the Upper New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

or internalized oppression; preaching which relies on strategies of white supremacy and racism to attempt to dismantle them.

- **White Anti-Racism Homiletic:** a homiletic designed to interrupt, disrupt, and dismantle racism such that its systems and expressions are given less and less social, cultural, political, ecclesial, and personal space to survive and thrive.
- **Racial Positionality:** even though race is not biologically based, we live in a world where the consequences of race are real; because we are treated differently based in race, we see ourselves, the world, and each other differently based on our racialized perspectives; this also means direct targets of racism often can see examples and functioning of racism where white people do not.¹⁰
- **Differential Ethic:** in contrast to systems which divide work equally among people, a differential ethic requires that different people will have diverse work to do, dissimilar responsibilities, nuanced participation in trust-building, and will take on varied amounts and categories of risk; regarding a differential ethic of anti-racism, the variables are based in one's racial identity and relationship to privilege or harm within a system of racism.¹¹

Subjectivity/Objectivity: Where's/Why's Michelle in All of This?

Objectivity, often, serves as a litmus test for trusted and factual research. Seemingly unquestioned for many years, claiming research objectivity garnered historical support as a way for “the truth” to supersede a researcher’s or organization’s biases or influence. Many positive results emerged from this divorce: the Church’s teachings could be

¹⁰ This definition is a paraphrase of many I have crafted during my work at GCORR.

¹¹ Ibid.

challenged, scientific advancements could be severed from an industry's profit, or a cure could be discovered despite a researcher's prejudice against the area of the world from which it hailed. In controlled instances, objectivity holds the power to uncover truths, scandals, and miracles.

However, in cases of social-political dynamics, it is impossible for the researcher to remove themselves from the research field. We cannot remove ourselves from the realm of human interactions or the ways that societies function as if we have no human interactions or function within any society. Human tendencies and perspectives remain, even in situations where no immediate or direct connection with the research field or participants exists. Some research methodologies attend to this by asking researchers not to deny our subjectivity (our perspectives, our experiences, our interpretive lenses, and biases) but rather to name them such that readers can take them into consideration as they examine our proposals and research outcomes. In this way, researchers create transparency, rather than obfuscate our realities by refusing to admit them and their interpretive weight upon our research and findings.

Explicitly named subjectivity for white people doing anti-racism research and work is critical. Not only are we within the sphere of human interaction and lived society, but we are also directly connected with the system of racism and benefit from it. There is no space for those of us who are white to stand outside of this system no matter the type, amount, or duration of the anti-racism work we do. Thus, our research about anti-racism must also include a subjective component naming directly how we function within this system amid our proclamations or efforts to dismantle it. If only for reasons of accountability, white

people must be as transparent as possible as we do and research this work in order that our commitment to our privileges, “common sense,” and logic based in the system of racism is displayed for critique and correction. If we consider, then, subjectivity an internal work, and objectivity an external work of research, I propose we also consider the work of anti-racism as an internal and external endeavor for those of us who are white: a “both/and” of its own kind.

When those of us who are white place intention and action for doing the work of anti-racism in tandem, required is a commitment simultaneously internal and external. No matter the time spent, or outcomes delivered, white people doing anti-racism work are concomitantly the privileged/prioritized/protected group within the system of racism and those attempting to dismantle it. Thus, those of us who are white must make essential and incontrovertible our internal work to dismantle our attachment and devotion to the system and the benefits it offers us. Being so, my work as a white person who desires to interrupt and dismantle racism must include both my internal work and external evidenced outcomes. Internally, those of us who are white must exhaustively and repeatedly extradite every one of our racist values, ideas, and actions. Externally, white people must elevate the priority of external evidenced anti-racist outcomes above our feelings, our intentions, our distractions, and our defensiveness. Otherwise, we prioritize our “attachment and devotion” to the system that we proclaim a desire to dismantle.

This proposition to describe decision-making phenomena does not limit itself to racism, anti-racism, or white people. All people make decisions based on a hierarchy of values. Should one value “not lying” above all else, the circumstances in which they find

themselves cannot move them to tell a lie. However, perhaps this same one values saving a human life, and the opportunity to save a life occurs determinant upon them telling a lie. This one must now decide between two self-determined moral imperatives: lie and save a life, or not lie to the contrary. The prioritized value makes the decision. Even the absence of a decision makes a decision in that by not doing anything the lie does not occur and thus neither does the saving of a life. In terms of anti-racism, then, those of us who are white must constantly decide whether to prioritize that which continues the system that prioritizes, protects, and privileges us or that which dismantles it. Furthermore, when white people refuse to develop our capabilities to dismantle the expressions and system of racism that benefit us, we enact tactics which are highly effective at obstructing the best of anti-racism strategies. These tactics are often referred to, now, as white fragility.

As a white person researching anti-racism and desiring to do its work, my methodology includes subjectivity nuanced by the realities of my racial positionality. In the following ways, my research, wording, and proposals might seem counter to expected research models but remain consistent with the subjectivity and internal work necessary for white people researching and doing anti-racism work.

1. Phrases such as, “for those of us who are white,” allow me to speak about the work white people must do and include myself.
2. I use the words, “our” and “we,” within sentences and paragraphs referring to white people. I use these words to refuse to distance myself from my whiteness, the anti-

racism work I must do, the benefits I continue to receive from the system and expressions of racism, and the racism white people enact.¹²

3. I do not create distinctions between the racism I have perpetrated and that which I have not/do not. This strategy accomplishes at least two things:
 - a. I refuse to distance myself from racism of which I am capable even while steadfast to renounce.
 - b. I counter the defensive strategy those of us who are white use to distance ourselves from our whiteness, other white people, or our own racism. I.e., “but I don’t perpetrate that kind/type of racism.”
4. One of my main goals in doing this work, both for myself and alongside other white people, is to reduce space, cushion, comfort, respect, and permission for white fragility. White fragility has the distractive or dismissive power to obstruct all but the most iron-clad or miraculous anti-racism strategies, especially in spaces where white people domineer in number or power. Thus, in this research, my life, and in my work as an anti-racism trainer I invoke the following:
 - a. I refrain from offering white people praise for perpetrating racism. This sounds obvious. However, many white people continue to desire “points” or qualifications or permission to continue to perpetrate racism as long as we did not intend it or if we are attempting some (self-proclaimed) form of anti-racism. I have found the latter does nothing to counter white fragility or break the narcissistic relationship those of us who are white have with our own goodness, or feeling good, as the prerequisite for our anti-racism work.

¹² Any lack of clarity as to whether “our” or “we” refers to white people enacting racism is directly related to my ineffective grammar usage and will be corrected upon awareness of the error.

- b. I normalize the reality of white fragility as part of what white people must work through as we engage in anti-racism work and name the boundaries within which we must build resilience to it without harming BIPAL people. I do not normalize, accept, or permit the weaponization of whiteness or humanness for the sake of whiteness that accompanies white fragility.
 - c. Part of my reasoning for restricting partial praise for anti-racism work done by those of us who are white while also perpetrating racism is to build our resilience to white fragility so that we can do more and more anti-racism work without obstructing it, causing harm, or stopping.
5. I focus on interrogating the racism that funds white people's white fragility versus focusing on healing the feelings emerging from our white fragility. Rather than reward the harm, white fragility is interrupted and dismantled when those of us who are white are challenged to confront the racism in our beliefs, values, expectations, assumptions, or actions our white fragility exposes. In other words, dismantling the racism and our attachment to it dismantles the white fragility used to protect it.

Method/s of Research and Accountability

For this project, I intent to utilize a discursive analysis to discern if and how the white supremacist idea that "white people's goodness is non-negotiable" no matter how much racism we perpetrate, is functioning as a philosophical tautology within white anti-racism homiletics. I am interested to track the theological, pedagogical, and homiletic strategies capable of interrupting and dismantling the system and expressions of racism, especially those which emerge from anti-racism homiletics written by white homiliticians. With

specific attention to homiletic content or methodologies that defend the notion that white people retain our goodness, no matter our racist motivations and actions, I will be interrogating each source with the following questions:

1. In what linguistic and symbolic ways, both explicitly and implicitly, does this source protect the notion that “white people are good” despite our racism?
2. In what ways, if at all, does this homiletic counter or limit white people’s goodness?
3. How does this homiletic’s theology address guilt or shame? In what ways, if at all, are these theologically tied to a defense of white people’s goodness?
4. How does this homiletic’s pedagogy address epistemic value and trust, critical and engaged learning, and anti-racism teaching strategies? In what ways, if at all, are these pedagogically tied to a defense of white people’s goodness?
5. How does this homiletic guide preachers to prepare and proclaim anti-racism sermons? How, if at all, does this guidance defend white people’s goodness?
6. What forms of racism, if any, does this homiletic replicate or reify?
7. How, if at all, does this homiletic distance white people from our blame for racism and/or our responsibility to engage in the work of anti-racism?

Structures and Methods of Accountability

I, like others, believe white people must do our own work.¹³ This work includes making ourselves accountable to people who are direct targets of racism to determine the

¹³ The reference to white people “doing our own work” highlights specific anti-racism work for which those of us who are white are responsible. Because racism functions as individual and systemic expressions of white supremacy, anti-racist white people still benefit from increased access, resources, and epistemic trust and must engage in personal critical reflection, robust repentance, and tangible reparations, as part of and in addition to disrupting, dismantling, and destroying racism. Simultaneously, when white people “do our own work” we vow to resist the temptation to rely on BIPAL people to teach us, care for us, or coddle us as we engage in the areas of anti-racism

faithfulness of our work. With this project I pledge to do, at least, the following, listed in no particular order:

1. Intentionally work to build my resilience to my white fragility while continuing the personal work of anti-racism I need to do as a person racialized as white.
2. Actively interrogate the on-the-ground realities of anti-racism work with people who are racialized as white without allowing timelines for racial justice and equity progress to be determined by white people's comfort, including my own.
3. Allow the personal testimonies, stories, and experiences of my Metropolitan A.M.E. family, my A.M.E. ministerial colleagues, BIPAL authors I have read, and other BIPAL people to "hold court" as I write to ensure I have real people in mind as I create anti-racism content and strategies.
4. Resist any pressure to add white Faculty to my dissertation committee who serve to make other white people feel comfortable; to reinforce the status quo of white supremacy within the academy; or to add validity (or pseudo-validity) to a white Faculty's curriculum vitae despite their perpetuation of racism in other aspects of academic life including but not limited to the classroom, administration, or ministry.

OVERVIEW OF PROJECT

Both/And Anti-Racism Homiletics: Addressing the Dual Oppressor/Co-Conspirator Reality of 21st Century White Preachers Working to Interrupt and Dismantle Racism with Preaching

work listed above. There is plenty of material from BIPAL authors provided free or by purchase that allows white people access to guidance and wisdom BIPAL communities want us to know and to practice.

This project sets out to create an anti-racism homiletic which avoids perpetrating racism and is built upon a method, theological and pedagogical in nature, upon which preachers can craft anti-racist, anti-racism sermons. It does not purport to teach a preacher how to preach: voice, rhythm, length, structure, flow, body language, or otherwise. Rather, it creates a method by which preachers can learn how anti-racism can exist explicitly within a homiletic while providing boundaries for avoiding perpetrating racism in sermons. To do so, however, requires a nuanced approach to address how whiteness, white supremacy, and racism function in theology, pedagogy, and homiletics. Starting with a clearly articulated theology, with anti-racism as its funding value, provides a robust God-centered approach and connection with the socio-political realities of racism and the work to dismantle it. Pedagogy often functions more silently under the surface of sermons than theology. Yet, when anti-racist and made transparent, pedagogy responsibly bridges an anti-racist theology and an anti-racist homiletic.

“Both/And” as structure and language ground this work in nuances necessary for those of us who are white to engage honorably in anti-racism work. The “Both/And” title structure provides an entry point to discuss the ways in which those of us who are white function *both* as those who are protected, privileged, and prioritized by the system and expressions of racism, *and* are attempting to dismantle it. There is no space outside of the system of racism for white people to exist, and to assert otherwise, is disingenuous and perpetrates racism. The “both/and” as language, does more than name this reality. Within theology, “both/and” language reframes our understanding of guilt and shame as that which have *both* been used maliciously by a lazy Church to control people *and* as anthropological course correctors God uses to guide those of us who are white back toward our

humanness. Further, a “both/and” understanding of grace convicts those of us who are white *both* to accept God’s unconditional provision for our salvation *and* to do the anti-racism work as the condition to activate its reality. Within pedagogy, “both/and” language helps us to recognize the necessity of *both* liberatory education based in agency *and* obedience-based teaching requiring students (those of us who are white) to submit to the strategies and leadership of teachers (BIPAL people).

At its core, this project is a homiletic theology which serves to prioritize anti-racism as an ethos to drive sermon construction. Rather than focus on examining sermons, “Both/And Anti-Racism Homiletics” serves to provide a model from which preachers can learn the work and workings of anti-racism to create sermons that are theologically rich, pedagogically responsible, and anti-racist at their core. This project hopes to prepare preachers to go beyond the “dos and don’ts” lists that appear in the homiletic chapter. To do so, this work serves as a scaffolding of sorts by which preachers internalize an anti-racist anti-racism theology and pedagogy creating a practiced capability to address racism no matter the form or place in which it exists.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Introduction: White people, in our anti-racism efforts, often replicate racism. White anti-racism homiletics, replicates racism by the linguistic and theological gymnastics necessary to protect, at all costs, the philosophical tautology, “white people are good.” Those of us who are white consistently and persistently protect our need to believe in our own goodness before we will engage in anti-racism – including that of preaching.

Moreover, we demand external validation from BIPAL people even while proclaiming our intent or desire to dismantle racism. To create an anti-racist anti-racism homiletic, it must be funded by an anti-racist theology and pedagogy. In this way, what a sermon says about God and how it teaches its content, grounds itself in anti-racism. Undergirding it all, lies an anti-racist methodology which defines a foundational set of terms and assumptions which not only guide this work but also work to dismantle racism itself. Since this project serves to introduce a homiletic model, more specific and detailed future work could include a book-length anti-racist theology (from ch3); a book length anti-racist pedagogy (from ch4); a co-written project with BIPAL people to examine an anti-racism homiletic for churches, classes, or coalitions across lines of racial difference; a “how-to” teach anti-racism homiletics with practical resources and learning engagements; or an article linking anti-racist strategies with strategies on how to deal with narcissists.

CH 1: Literature Review: To investigate the current state of anti-racism homiletics, this literature review explores the depth and content of anti-racism homiletics written by white homiliticians. The focus prioritizes the intersection between white homiliticians who profess our desire to do anti-racism work through our discipline and the racism we perpetrate as we do so. Furthermore, this chapter seeks to interrogate each source to discover how, if at all, it is founded upon the philosophical tautology, “white people are good,” and protects it as non-negotiable. Each work is set apart as its own sub-section and all are similarly ordered: high-level summaries, anti-racism template utilized, examples – if any – of racism perpetrated, and connections between the anti-racism template and racism present. Discursive analysis promotes a close and exegetical reading of each text seeking to present sources, as best as possible, in terms of the homilitician’s intent for

content and purpose for anti-racism template chosen. An anti-racism interpretive lens is applied afterward to reveal and describe outcomes counter to stated intentions.

CH 2 Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology: The chapter's subtitle, "Before I A.C.T. I Preach," is based in the acronym *Articulated Context Theologies* and contends that all preaching is based in theology and all theology is based in context. Some theologies assume their context as universal, but all theologies emerge from and make sense within a particular contextual framework. All preaching is based in and proclaims the theology which grounds it. Anti-racist anti-racism preaching requires an anti-racist anti-racism theology. An anti-racist anti-racism theology demands an explicitly articulated context such that the reality and function of white supremacy, whiteness, and racism come to the fore to be named and challenged. To do so, this chapter reconstitutes theologies of guilt, shame, grace, and responsibility to address the specific requirements necessary to liberate white people from our co-dependency with racism and the consequences of racism to our humanity, while simultaneously holding us responsible for its death-dealing impact upon BIPAL people. A three-fold method of reclaiming guilt and shame, particularizing race, and reimagining grace provide the bedrock for an articulated context theology capable of interrupting and dismantling racism within homiletics and preaching directed toward those of us who are white.

CH 3 Anti-Racism Pedagogy: Just as theology grounds a homiletic so also does pedagogy. An anti-racist anti-racism pedagogy must attend to the dual nature of those of us who are white, who concomitantly benefit from the oppression system we work to dismantle. The both/and approach to grace in the theology chapter overflows as an

interpretive lens for an anti-racist anti-racism pedagogy capable of addressing how the oppressor comes to conscientization of the harm we enact while continuing the work of dismantling the very system that provides us protection, privileges, and priority. Considering Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as a template for conscientization through the interpretive lens of the Articulated Context of white people, creates a *Pedagogy of the Oppressor*. An anti-racist anti-racism pedagogy for white people must include aspects both of the original conscientization model (internalized "aha" moments) and the banking model (direct deposits made from anti-racist strategies created or co-signed by BIPAL people to be obeyed exactly by us). Just as our identity as white people working to dismantle racism is both/and so also must an anti-racist anti-racism pedagogical strategy.

CH 4: Anti-Racism Homiletic: Prophetic preaching exists along a wide horizon. Just as there are multiple aspects of oppression so also exist multiple strategies to dismantle them. An anti-racist anti-racism homiletic creates in content and proclamation information, urgency, and skill sets for people to interrupt and dismantle racism. For those of us who are white, specific both/and theologies and pedagogies undergird preaching that will do so without perpetrating more racism. This anti-racist anti-racism homiletic begins with a constructive prophetic preaching model including Naming, Challenge, Repentance, and Hope. Nuances emerge from applying a multi-fold anti-racist interpretive lens: unconditional/conditional grace, guilt and shame as theological goods for white people, pedagogy of the oppressor, and dismantling the philosophical tautology, "white people are good." The chapter concludes with specific anti-racist anti-racism strategies within each of the four prophetic preaching categories.

CH 5: After Dismantling the “White People Are Good” Philosophical

Tautology: In many instances, those of us who are white replicate racism in our anti-racism writings, research, and work. At the core of contemporary anti-racism homiletics written by white people stands the philosophical tautology, “white people are good.” Much of the racism those of us who are white perpetrate, even in homiletics written expressly to dismantle racism, stems from the theological and linguistic gymnastics required to protect white people’s goodness at all costs. Thus, an anti-racist anti-racism homiletic must find ways to counter this tautology’s ideology and obstruct its power. An anti-racist anti-racism homiletic based in Naming, Challenge, Repentance, and Hope constructs strategies for white preachers to interrupt and dismantle, rather than perpetrate, racism through preaching.

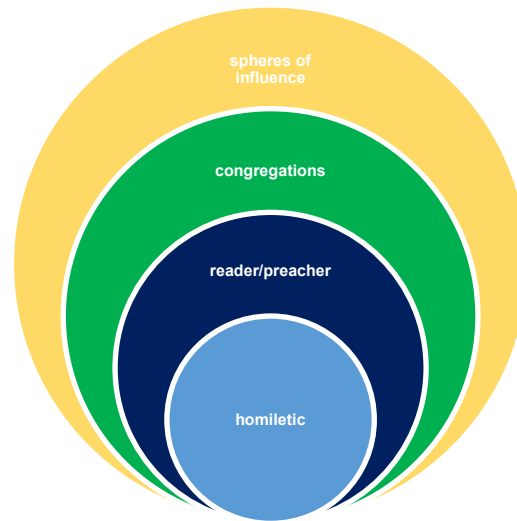
Chapter One: LITERATURE REVIEW

A growing number of white homiliticians have (finally) concluded that 21st century white Christians need anti-racism sermons. All preachers need homiletic praxis, which provides both opportunities and capabilities for resisting racism. Preachers racialized as white must also resist racism, in particular, from three (3) racially positioned fronts:

1. the pedagogical work of learning about race, racism, and anti-racism (which whiteness and experience have falsely taught us is unnecessary for ministry faithfulness or mobilization),
2. the self-critical work of realizing, recognizing, and repenting for our participation in and protection of individual and systemic racism, and
3. the homiletical work of creating and proclaiming sermons that tangibly disrupt and dismantle racism while teaching congregations to do the same.

One might assume a homiletic featuring anti-racism in preaching and the teaching of preaching would achieve its intrinsically named goal. Yet, anti-racism homiletics authored by white homiliticians often replicates racism and its dangerous consequences. White preachers often lack enough anti-racism knowledge and skill to differentiate between book covers which market an anti-racism homiletic and that which actually teaches anti-racism preaching without replicating racism. The power wielded by the author as an “expert” in the discipline of study or ministry coupled with a lack of additional anti-racism materials with which to compare it solidifies for the white preacher the material must be anti-racist.

As with any persuasive homiletic, the consequences are increasingly generative:



Homiletics' Generative Consequences 1

from the reader who is often a preacher or minister to the people with whom the reader preaches or ministers, and finally, the preacher's and peoples' spheres of influence beyond the four walls of the Church. So, instead of disrupting and dismantling racism, these homiletics reinforce racism in deeply insidious ways. For example, many white preachers who read these texts with a commitment to putting their intentions for anti-racism into action are ill-equipped to discern expressions of racism disguised as anti-racism. Racism, encoded with theological-sounding talk and a distorted hint of anti-racism, is free to deploy an ever-widening company of soldiers to weaponize the Good News of the Gospel. Rather than white preachers resisting its spread, many become racism's most faithful disciples.

A secondary assumption might connect the cause for anti-racism homiletics replicating racism with their inability or unwillingness to call out racism for what it is—harm, evil, or sin. In my work as an anti-racism trainer, I have experienced the lengths to which those

of us who are white will go to protect ourselves from charges of racism, to amplify our good (or naïve) intentions, and to whitewash or ignore the violence of racism—especially ours. I began this research presuming the racism present within these works stemmed from an askew focus—the comfort of white people versus the dismantling of racism. I thought these anti-racism resources were soft-pedaling the realities of racism, refusing to name the harm and violence of racism to protect white folks’ feelings as our awareness and that of our responsibility heightened. It surprised me to learn, after reading the collection of sources, some perpetrated racism *while* calling out racism without cover. Some named racism specifically as white people’s responsibility. Others defined racism as sin. Some called white people to account for our fake, words-only repentance. I was at a loss but determined to discern commonalities as to why these anti-racism homiletics were perpetrating racism within their pages.

This literature review summarizes six (6) sources, written by white homiliticians, prioritizing anti-racism in their homiletic. I address them chronologically to hint about which work builds upon another and place each source within a timeline before, during, or after the 2016 U.S. presidential election. For each piece, I engage a three-fold review and assessment: [1] a high-level overview of key ideas; [2] a summary of how the resource employs or promotes anti-racism; and [3] an account of the racism, if present, in each resource. The first reference of each aspect of racism describes it with the most detail. Descriptions’ length or depth does not equate to the significance of the source’s use of the expression of racism. I will suggest, by the end of this chapter, that what I find in common among anti-racism homiletics that perpetrate racism is the philosophical tautology, “white people are good,” and the linguistic, theological gymnastics to protect it at all costs.

Christine Smith's Preaching as Weeping, Confession, and Resistance (1992),¹⁴ presents preaching as a public theological act which names webs of oppression as radical evil. *Preaching* allocates one chapter each for handicappism, ageism, sexism, heterosexism, white racism, and classism. Smith points not simply to individual expressions of oppression but the systems, values, and theologies that “dominate the world in which we preach.”¹⁵

Smith's *Preaching* offers a threefold homiletic method functioning as her sermon construction model: weeping, confession, and resistance.¹⁶ Since oppression survives and thrives in the physical and psychological distance we place between ourselves and its concrete examples, *weeping* seeks to help people connect with our empathy and values of justice. *Confession* includes a “profound truth-telling” revealed with deep and robust social analysis, leading not to empty ritual but a purging that can heal, confront, and enliven. Both our reaction to evil and our stand against it emerges as *resistance*. Preachers resist injustice by opposing the theologies which ground it and creating embodied life-affirming theologies which center justice as non-negotiable.

Smith's homiletic is framed similarly to Fred Craddock's imperative for the preacher's journey to be mirrored in the sermon to invite listeners into the same.¹⁷ The organization of Smith's book crafts an invitation to preachers to wrestle with each area of injustice via heightened awareness, systemic analysis, and tangible counteractions. The preacher

¹⁴ Christine M. Smith, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession, and Resistance: Radical Responses to Radical Evil* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4-9.

¹⁷ Fred B. Craddock, *As One Without Authority*, Revised and with New Sermons (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001).

processes first. Next, she creates a sermon that invites the church to move from “comfortable distance to weeping, denial to confession, and complicity to resistance.”¹⁸ Smith’s chapter on white racism asserts that for uprooting white supremacy, the goal is conversion. From changing one’s worldview to working for tangible justice—including reparation—conversion includes several steps.¹⁹ Sermons that help white people confess complicity and sinfulness, name and understand whiteness, acknowledge and transform our language that reinforces racism, engage in mourning and honest re-remembering, and honor difference, will finally bring the hope which both the church and world require.²⁰

Anti-Racism Strategy Presented

This form of anti-racism work concentrates on moving the reader or hearer from learning about racism to the “doing” of anti-racism. Smith’s pedagogy from internal awareness to repentance to change works to place the personal and the public/political on equal footing. This action-laden model differs from much of anti-racism work. In churches, especially, reliance solely upon internal reflection and awareness as primary drivers toward systemic change assume our personal “aha” moments will automatically bring the rest of the trajectory into being. Smith’s pedagogy for both homiletic and sermon construction evaluates the necessity of each of the three “moves” as equivalent, even while stationed within a developmental journey.

¹⁸ Smith, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession, and Resistance*, 7.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 125-134.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

Weeping, Confession, and Resistance's pedagogy serves another role in anti-racism work as well. Smith makes the process by which the preacher comes to awareness, confesses personal sin, and enacts resistance analogous to constructing the sermon content/journey. In doing so, Smith's homiletic pedagogy aligns the means of preacher preparation with the ends of both sermon construction and the hope for listener transformation. This tightening reduces the chance of hypocrisy between preacher and listener and scaffolds the method we must practice for anti-racism work. Black-activist and expert-pedagogue Audre Lorde contends, "you can't dismantle the master's house with the master's tools."²¹ In terms of anti-racism, it is impossible to dismantle racism using racism's logic system. To be clear, we can use the logic system of racism against the system of racism to dismantle it. However, replicating the logic system of racism will not dismantle racism. Thus, we cannot use the means of racism to create anti-racism ends.²²

Last but not exhaustively, Smith's anti-racism homiletic requires and centers the work of direct and specific naming within preaching, theology, and the "doing" of justice. "Preaching is an act of public theological naming... it is nothing less than interpreting our present world and an invitation to build a profoundly different new world," Smith says.²³ Preaching proclaims a theology that dually inspires us to and co-creates a new world where injustices reign no more. Many anti-racism trainings with white people fall short;

²¹ Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde*, New forward by Cheryl Clarke (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2007), 112.

²² Yet, those of us who are white attempt to do this all the time. In one of its more dastardly formulations, white folks will water down (whitewash) attempts while amplifying our intent to do the work of anti-racism by working "within the system" using an incremental system within a timeline that makes us feel comfortable. All the while, allowing racism to continue and defending it by explaining that sustainable change takes time and that not all (white) people are ready to the work yet.

²³ Smith, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession, and Resistance*, 2.

however, prolifically offering inspiring invitations to what “can be” without the tangible interruption and dismantling of the present world's oppressions. Preaching, for Smith, describes hope differently. Real hope of a just present and future relies upon telling truths that can shatter the illusions any oppression sets up to hide its mechanisms and methods.²⁴

Smith's anti-racism homiletic brings at least three noteworthy aspects of anti-racism to life. First, by creating a pedagogical method that moves preacher and listener from inner “aha” moment to repentance to action, *Weeping, Confession, and Resistance* enacts explicitly a trajectory meant to interrupt and dismantle racism. Rather than provide implicit permission for white folks to remain in our increasing-awareness stage, Smith's homiletic creates a template that expects action. Second, the methodological triad tightening the spaces between preacher's journey, sermon construction, and hoped-for listener response creates an implicit and explicit requirement for the means and ends to align. Instead of permitting rational dissonance between the logic systems of anti-racism and that of racism to remain, Smith's homiletic model scaffolds anti-racism work itself, which cannot use the means of racism to defeat it. Finally, preaching is a “truth-telling” act that can shatter racism's illusions and co-creates new worlds of anti-racism in its stead. Instead of pacifying white people's unawareness, Smith names the realities of racism, its consequences, and our responsibility to enact resistance for sustainable change.

²⁴ Ibid., 4-5.

Racism Perpetrated

Yet, even amid specific and direct naming of racism, its harm, and white people's responsibility to take responsibility for our perpetration of it, expressions of racism exist. Further, perpetration of racism exists in my deep temptation to explain away the racism present in terms of the year of publication. I find myself wanting to describe them as subtle forms of racism, or "our" unawareness of impact or outcome at the time of writing, and even the intent of the methods outweighing its outcome. I remain entrenched within my whiteness and enthralled enough with the logic system of racism such that, even while writing a dissertation about anti-racism, I synchronously work against my eagerness to defend racism within Smith's homiletic. Nevertheless, WCR (*Weeping, Confession, Resistance*) perpetrates racism in four ways: protecting white people's feelings or fragility, distancing ourselves from our whiteness, defending white segregation, and recentering whiteness.

White sociologist, Robin DiAngelo, is often erroneously attributed the discovery and naming of "white fragility" as phenomenological reality. Her published work of the same name²⁵ gathered popularity, especially among white people and white-dominant groups, and white supremacist ideology decided a white woman discovered it. However, BIPAL people have been aware of and resisting white fragility since racism's existence.

The term "white fragility" describes how those of us who are white weaponize our emotions and behaviors to protect ourselves from discomfort about or charges of racism.

²⁵ Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018).

White fragility counterintuitively exposes the brute force with which white people will defend ourselves over and against doing the work that anti-racism requires.²⁶ Any time a proclaimed anti-racism tactic or value highlights the feelings of white people, it adjusts an otherwise valuable anti-racism strategy – thus, reinforcing and accommodating white fragility.

In Smith’s work, this occurs when guilt is described as universally negative, to avoid, or that which shuts down white people’s awareness. For example, Smith describes “profound truth-telling” during worship as faithful while comparing “guilt-inducing” confessional acts as “worst-case scenarios” or “empty rituals.”²⁷ White people’s ability to see “the blatant realities” around us—necessary for the weeping portion of Smith’s homiletic—is hindered not by our unwillingness to avail ourselves of the plethora of knowledge but because of “high levels of pain and guilt” we experience.²⁸ In both cases, feeling guilt renders white people incapable of doing what is necessary for us to enact anti-racism. The implication is to avoid guilt versus avoiding actions that provoke it (racism).

Another tactic white folks, who proclaim to perform acts of anti-racism, use to perpetrate racism is to distance ourselves from our whiteness. Not all of us do this by refusing to identify as white or to admit how our whiteness privileges, prioritizes, and protects us within the system of racism. As in Smith’s homiletic, some of us, especially after we feel

²⁶ I remember sitting in the GCORR kitchen with, then, GCORR General Secretary Erin Hawkins when she described to me a panel discussion in which she had just participated. She described her discussion around white fragility not being fragile at all. Rather, from her experiences as a Black woman, the white people (white women specifically) who enacted it were using an exceptional amount of strength to protect themselves from charges of racism. Personal communication with (then GCORR General Secretary) Erin Hawkins, 2018.

²⁷ Smith, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession, and Resistance*, 4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 114.

we have reached a certain “level” or time-in doing anti-racism work or study, will distance ourselves from our whiteness by distancing ourselves from other white people. We point at those other white people who are racist, unaware of racism’s harmful consequences, who benefit from it without remorse, need more education, or need to have their privilege checked. Distancing happens in explicit and implicit expressions, sometimes by stating the above specifically or switching the word “our” with “their.”

Smith acknowledges (confesses, one might say) her complicity in racism with detail and transparency.²⁹ However, within her descriptions, she states, “white people must perceive *their* own complicity”³⁰ in how racism functions to obstruct its mechanisms and realities.³¹ She seemingly flips back to include herself, stating, “*our* honest individual and collective remembering will guide *us* in facing and resisting white supremacy.”³² Conversely, the reminder that “high levels of pain and guilt keep many white people from seeing blatant realities around *them*”³³ places her, again, outside of how whiteness functions.³⁴ This distancing from our whiteness or other white people who “do that particular racist thing” fortifies a lie. The logic system of racism, not anti-racism, proclaims that with enough anti-racism work or “level” of study or awareness, those of us who are white somehow step outside of the system of racism and are no longer privy to

²⁹ Ibid., 112-114.

³⁰ All italics in this paragraph are added for emphasis of my point and not from the original work.

³¹ Smith, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession, and Resistance*, 113.

³² Ibid., 113-114.

³³ Perhaps a note highlighting the false equivalency of pain felt by white people as we become more aware of our causing racism and the pain felt by BIPAL people as the direct targets of racism is in order. Pain felt by white people causes us to hide our face from the realities of racism because they implicate us. Pain felt by BIPAL people because of racism creates no space of (absolute/protective) hiding from its realities.

³⁴ This quote makes me question whether or not Smith is including herself as a white person in the previous sentence, hence my use of the word “seemingly.” I wonder if her use of “our” is a collective our to include both BIPAL people and those of us who are not.

our unearned privileges, prioritization, or protection. Rather than dismantling racism, these scenarios reinforce the white supremacist notions of white people excusing ourselves from our responsibilities and ignoring our unearned racialized privileges we still receive from the system we work to dismantle.

Defending white segregation among white anti-racism homiliticians often does not include supporting its most blatant policies or choices. However, every time white people absolve ourselves of our responsibility for our awareness of racism or anti-racism, we make excuses for how white segregation works to uphold racism. When Smith writes that “white people are often so far removed from an awareness of what it means to be white that many have difficulty...,” it matters not what comes next to finish that sentence. Smith explicitly connects the difficulties associated with anti-racism work with a physical and symbolic removal of our whiteness from our awareness. This removal explains and protects the realities of white segregation, which separates us by race in living, schooling, working, worshipping, relating, etc. In the 21st century, most people have access to Google, smartphone videos, and virtual access to people worldwide in some format. For those of us who are white to remain “removed” from our awareness of our whiteness, we must choose to accept, not reject, the racism of white segregation.

Amid naming the requirement to change our language and wording to dismantle racism within preaching and anti-racism work, Smith re-centers whiteness in at least two ways: with wording choices. Within the anti-racism strategy of raising white people’s consciousness to racism, Smith instructs us to “listen to the voices of those oppressed and violated by this form of domination and to let those voices and truths confront us and

change us.”³⁵ Language of choice weakens the demand for those of us who are white to remain in the work of anti-racism. Thus, this replicates the ample opportunities and routes of success the system of racism provides for us without having to do so. Furthermore, allowing the voices and truths of BIPAL people to confront and change us recenters whiteness as the dictator by which those of us who are white hear all voices, believe truths, and make changes.³⁶

Suzanne Duchesne's Anti-Racist Preaching (April 2014) argues even preachers who desire to “dismantle racist policies and engage in anti-racist behavior, can unwittingly reify race constructions” with illustrations and underlying messages laced with racism.³⁷ However, utilizing a multi-faceted anti-racist homiletic, we can engage in several strategies to transform our sermons, our worship, ourselves, and our congregations.

Duchesne defines anti-racist preaching as that which employs an anti-racist homiletic: a way of constructing and proclaiming sermons which “prevent the re-inscription of racism within every sermon—regardless of the topic, text, or hermeneutical focus.”³⁸ Anti-racist preaching, in contrast to sermons that “just” preach against racism, uses an anti-racist

³⁵ Smith, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession, and Resistance*, 122.

³⁶ Another place this occurs is when Smith says those of us who are white must move from the domination model to the sharing model. Sharing implies one party has more than they need and offers from benevolence to gift some to another. This is true whether we are talking about money, other resources, positions, or benefit of the doubt. When that which is gained by white supremacy and racism is “shared” the realities of racialized inequity are coded in generosity and whitewashed to abolish our white guilt. The word share doesn’t work because you can’t share what you steal. Thus, a more appropriate, transparent, and anti-racist term would be moving to a “redistribution model” or “reparations model.”

³⁷ Suzanne Wenonah Duchesne, “Antiracist Preaching: Homiletical Strategies for Undermining Racism in Worship,” *Liturgy* 29 (2014): 11.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

lens that seeks to “heighten the preacher’s awareness... (guide) rhetorical and linguistic decisions, and (avoid)... stereotypes.” Anti-racist preaching addresses racism both as an individual and a systemic reality. Transformation of the people toward anti-racism is the goal.³⁹

In a three-fold strategy, the preacher begins by committing to a critical self-reflection of socio-political identity and location, engaging in cross-cultural dialogue among the congregation, and employing a deep power analysis that grounds them both.⁴⁰ Anti-racist preachers prioritize clarity by utilizing racial analysis with care for contextualized pedagogical value and utility.⁴¹ Choices made in illustrations, worldviews, biblical hermeneutics, preacher homogeneity from the pulpit, and refusal to co-opt voices not our own serve to dislocate stereotypes.⁴²

Finally, anti-racist preaching implores us to consider extra-sermonic aspects of worship as seriously as our homiletic efforts. Choosing in-church images, artwork, music, prayers, scripture translations, and our lived racial justice work outside of church creates the basis for a transformation that lasts beyond the Amen. Ultimately, individual aspects of anti-racism are not enough. What is necessary for anti-racism preaching is an ongoing and growing awareness of the work required to undermine racism and transform people into anti-racists: “a commitment to continuous conscientization.”⁴³

³⁹ Ibid., 12.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 13-15.

⁴¹ Ibid., 15-16.

⁴² Ibid., 16-18.

⁴³ Ibid., 19.

Anti-Racism Strategy Presented

Duchesne's anti-racism homiletic rests on her insistence on an anti-racism ethos versus the over-reliant upon sprinkling method. Rather than provide a checklist of "special" days, texts, guest speakers/preachers to sprinkle on top of a white-dominant model, Duchesne supports using an "anti-racism lens."⁴⁴ Anti-racism as a lens can serve to interpret any biblical text, to dismantle racism in every aspect of worship, and to create continual conscientization for individual and collective transformation. Using anti-racism to generate an ethos stands directly in contrast with models which provide the superficial performance of anti-racism on top of templates and cultures deeply rooted in and protected by white supremacy and racism. The latter attempts to cover half-hearted intentions to dismantle racism by putting on a show of "woke" sounding words or guest speakers/preachers who are tolerated on particular days but considered too radical for regular interaction. Duchesne rightly recognizes how the logic system of anti-racism must not simply blanket the logic system of racism. Even Harry Potter's invisibility cloak did not transform what was underneath it but temporarily kept it from view.⁴⁵

Two additional aspects of Duchesne's anti-racism homiletic deserve mention as well. First, though made much more public and found in everyday anti-racism work now compared to her writing's publication, the insistence on addressing racism both in individual expressions and as a system remains debated in some organizations and minds. Many groups/people, who readily and adamantly proclaim the necessity of dismantling racism, can present little evidence connecting their anti-racism work to doing

⁴⁴ Ibid., 12.

⁴⁵ J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (New York: Scholastic Inc., 1997), 201-207.

so. In much of the anti-racism workshops I facilitate, the “what’s next” steps and accountability measures reveal a disjunct among stated values, understanding racism as both individual expression and systemic reality, and the focus of anti-racism to incorporate into their lives/work/organization.

Second is Duchesne’s mention of a power analysis.⁴⁶ Often, anti-racism work with those of us who are white, especially in churches, avoids mention of power, as if power is evil in and of itself. This misinterpretation of power added to white people’s ability to explain away our unearned racialized privileges (of all sorts) locks racism in place by refusing to address one of the main pillars which supports it. Without addressing power dynamics head-on, it is impossible to dismantle racism that unjustly attributes power, inequitably distributes power, and surreptitiously hides how power functions to promote hierarchies and normalizing of whiteness. By keeping power dynamics of how whiteness steals that which is not ours, this aspect of anti-racism work also prioritizes “attempt(s) to honor multiple voices... (without) co-opting them.”⁴⁷

Duchesne’s “Antiracist Preaching” promotes an anti-racism ethos that refuses to engage the “sprinkling” method. Rather than covering over a white-dominant template with special days and guests, an anti-racism lens simultaneously interprets and analyzes all aspects of worship inside and outside the church walls. Under this umbrella, a dual focus on individual and systemic racism and addressing power dynamics determine what continual conscientization toward racial justice will mean. Rather than allowing more

⁴⁶ Duchesne, *Antiracist Preaching*, 15

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

entrenched aspects of racism to exist unbothered, Duchesne's homiletic insists all expressions of the system, including but not limited to the power dynamics the system tries desperately to hide, should be exposed and addressed. Still, racism also exists in "Antiracism Preaching" with the whitewashing of racial distinction, protecting white people's feelings/fragility, and recentering whiteness.

Racism Perpetrated

Duchesne's whitewashing of racial distinction is most prominent in this article, at least partially because of her insistence that cultural nuances and naming of all parts of one's identity are essential for exposing where stereotypes hide. However, in an attempt to highlight multicultural diversities, what remains is a collection of whitewashed avoidance mechanisms. In lieu of racial descriptors, congregations and people are described as: "multicultural, urban congregation,"⁴⁸ "for preachers, especially those who identify with the predominant white culture...,"⁴⁹ "cross-cultural conversation,"⁵⁰ "cultural, ethnic, and gender diversity,"⁵¹ and "multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-lingual."⁵² Even within her specific mention of a "frank discussion of her whiteness," she describes the congregation as "multicultural" rather than explicitly consisting of folks across lines of racial difference.⁵³ In an article specifically aimed at teaching anti-racism preaching, consistently the descriptors of diversity water down the specifics of race. Focusing

⁴⁸ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁹ Here, though Duchesne has yet to identify her own whiteness in the article (which happens 5 pages later), she distances herself from whiteness by stating "those who" versus "those of us who are white." Duchesne, *Antiracist Preaching*, 11.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 15.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., 18.

⁵³ Ibid., 16.

specifically on race is necessary, especially in white-dominant environments and within educational materials aimed at those of us who are white. Race-specific emphasis interrupts the momentum of racism present even within otherwise diverse environments. Additionally, it disrupts the deep drive white people have to divert attention away from our perpetration of racism with other aspects of diversity or oppression present. Perhaps, also, the focused effort to flatten the specifics of race from the conversation is why she languages the racism of the “Bagger Vance” movie clip from the opening example as “ambiguity” versus naming it racist.⁵⁴

White people’s feelings/fragility is protected in at least two ways, one of which is in direct opposition to the anti-racism strategy described. In addition to protecting white people’s feelings by adjusting anti-racism strategies for us to avoid feeling guilt at all costs, our white fragility is catered to by misattributing our intentions or euphemizing them. For example, Duchesne describes preachers “who want to dismantle racist policies and engage in anti-racist behavior, can unwittingly reify race constructions.”⁵⁵ However, in doing so, she buries our racism under our “good” intent, which does not know it has committed racism.”⁵⁶ Amplifying intentions over outcomes is a prime strategy for catering to white fragility and working to appease any bad feelings of those of us who are white. Woefully, Duchesne’s second example lies within its exact opposite strategy. She sets up the specific naming of whiteness (in this case, hers) with the multicultural congregation she serves as an anti-racism strategy with a positive outcome. It is

⁵⁴ Ibid., 11.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

compared, however, not with how naming whiteness functions in a white-dominant environment, but with how it may “trigger hearers to shut down and dismiss the sermon.”⁵⁷ For groups already formed across lines of diversity (one may assume racial diversity), the naming of whiteness is anti-racist and good but not so for the group of white people more deeply entrenched in white segregation? This hypothesis only makes sense in the logic system of racism.

This last example also recenters whiteness in that it caters to white people’s comfort to discern the timeline and content of anti-racism work. If those of us who are white dictate (either explicitly or implicitly) the timeline or scope of anti-racism work, the strategy recenters whiteness and bolsters racism. In “Antiracism Preaching,” the focus on building deeper multicultural relationships also recenters whiteness. Focus on “moving beyond superficial multicultural sharing”⁵⁸ and “nurturing relationships that build trust”⁵⁹ implies expected deeper sharing. In terms of anti-racism work for white people and white-dominant groups, this usually expects BIPAL people will do the deep sharing of their experiences of racialized trauma/terror while those of us who are white increase awareness of racism and our perpetration of it. This inequitable power dynamic is one of the very aspects of power that needs to be analyzed, as insisted upon earlier in this very same article. An equal burden never exists between BIPAL people sharing – and reliving – racialized terror and white folks becoming more aware of and “feeling bad about” our perpetration of racism. Recentring whiteness is only one aspect of racism here; those of

⁵⁷ Ibid., 16.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 15.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 19.

us who are white demanding racialized trauma porn under the guise of building deep relationships is another.

Lastly, Duchesne echoes Smith's recentering whiteness by using the language of permission for white people. In "Antiracism Preaching," the call for avoiding co-opting others (actually appropriating or stealing) others' work and experiences includes "allow(ing) people to speak for themselves."⁶⁰ White supremacy functions here to create the illusion that white people determine whether BIPAL people speak for themselves. Instead, anti-racism requires those of us who are white to refrain from stealing the words of BIPAL people. And when we do cite or amplify them, to at the very least spell their names correctly.⁶¹

Carolyn Browning Helsel, an alumna of Emory University, entitled her 2014 dissertation, *The Hermeneutics of Recognition*.⁶² Helsel insists that to preach about race and racism, white preachers need a "revised interpretive framework that can encompass the cognitive apprehension of racism, the personal formation required to work towards an anti-racist racial identity, and the theological sensitivity to the pervasiveness of racism."⁶³ Utilizing Paul Ricoeur's three-fold method of identification, personalization, and gratitude, Helsel creates an anti-racism topology for educating and equipping white preachers to preach on race and racism.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 17.

⁶¹ Rev. Dr. Teresa Fry Brown is listed on page 17 as Theresa Fry Brown.

⁶² Carolyn Browning Helsel, "The Hermeneutics of Recognition: A Ricoeurian Interpretive Framework for Whites Preaching on Racism" (PhD diss., Emory University, Atlanta, 2014).

⁶³ Ibid., abstract.

After a discursive analysis of sermons given by white preachers, Helsel interrogates our “reluctance to preach on racism,”⁶⁴ discerning three things. First, white preachers struggle with multiple definitions and interpretations of racism. Without a consistent interpretive framework for defining racism, white preachers ignore or reinscribe racism within sermons. Second, white preachers possess an underdeveloped sense of racial identity, if one at all. Without a racial identity that takes seriously how race impacts whiteness and white people’s worldview, white preachers underestimate the importance of preaching about race and racism. Third, white preachers rely on theologies that do not name or understand racism as sin. Theological lenses such as idolatry, estrangement, and bondage help white preachers recognize and preach about racism, not as a bad habit to give up but, instead, an intractable fallen-ness from which only God can save.⁶⁵

Principally, Helsel’s homiletic seeks to help white preachers break our sermonic silence on race and racism. White preachers require a model which helps us to identify expressions of racism, to recognize ourselves as white, to develop a white anti-racist identity of which we can be proud,⁶⁶ and to acknowledge our gratitude to God for saving us from that which we cannot save ourselves: the sin of racism. With specific cautions against using guilt and shame,⁶⁷ Helsel highlights the courage of which white preachers are capable when we engage in identity development and theology that refuse to shy away from the realities of race and racism, which persist whether we recognize it or not.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 18.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 32-34.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 8.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 80, 81, 97, 133 (footnote 18), 141, 241, 242, 245, 252.

Anti-Racism Strategy Presented

Helsel's anti-racism work focuses on the "meeting the people where they are" model. To counter pedagogical and leadership models which force people into obedience, the "meet the people where they are" model encourages contextualized wisdom that starts with what people know, believe, and do. Preachers then create pathways from there to the desired goal. In this case, Helsel points out that those of us who are white and preach lack terminology about race/racism, depth of racialized identity and understanding of what it means to be white, and a theology of racism that attends to both its seriousness and solution. Thus, her anti-racism homiletic is education-based: teach white people what we do not know, and we will both be able to do the new thing, and we will do it. In other words, once white people learn what to do, new ways of thinking about it, and the deeper theological realities at play, we will come to our own "aha" moments, which lead to authentic and sustained change.

As is often the case, the "meet the people where they are" model is combined with commitments to avoid guilt and shame. This anti-racism approach relies heavily on addressing white people's voracious proclivity to shutting down when confronted (especially directly) with the realities of race/racism and our perpetration of it. Guilt and shame, like emotional explosives, only serve to entrench white people's protective or paralyzing instincts to defend ourselves, avoid doing the work at all, or engage in total resistance to it. Thinking behind this anti-racism approach highlights the impossibility of any anti-racism strategy working if walls go up and (white) people shut down. Thus, critical measures to avoid white preachers' "white fragility" in the face of learning about

race/racism and white preachers' responsibility to preach about it include creating spaces of emotional safety and dignity while we learn anti-racism content and skills.

Racism Perpetrated

This model perpetrates racism intrinsically both in strategy and implementation, despite the broad appeal of this model (especially among those of us who are white). Inherently, within this pedagogy is the racism that protects white people's feelings/fragility and recenters whiteness. The pedagogy, overall, creates excuses for white people not doing the work of anti-racism and equates our unwillingness to do so with an inability to do so. In a time of unprecedented informational access and video testimonies/reporting, white people continually receive absolution from our responsibility as we are:

- portrayed as confused about conflicting terms.
- pardoned of our unrelenting need to feel good about ourselves before dismantling the oppression for which we are responsible, and
- provided a definition of racism as sin, not to increase our responsibility to abolish it but to place it all upon the God who is the only one who can forgive sin and create a new way.

Additionally, this process removes guilt and shame to immunize those of us who are white from both our humanity and the consequences of our racism, all in the name of combatting our resistance.

This anti-racism strategy – in method and methodology – concretizes racism by prioritizing white people's comfort to the detriment of actually interrupting and dismantling racism. Helsel's pedagogical template dislocates the means and ends of anti-racism work by using the logic system of racism (white people and our

feelings/fragility/comfort/timeline/permission) to center and drive strategy, content, and results. Moreover, just as Helsel’s approach prioritizes protecting white people’s feelings/fragility and recentering whiteness, these forms of racism permeate its implementation with a compounding effect.

Generally, white people’s feelings are protected as we are shielded from any guilt or shame and excused for the ways they “immobilize” us, create “burnout,” and “confusion.”⁶⁸ Helsel models the anonymity we should offer white preachers “so as not to embarrass them” when she holds back the preachers’ names of the sermons she critiques.⁶⁹ Through scaffolding and explicit languaging, this model clarifies that those of us who are white should be protected from any bad feelings as we continue to commit racism or stall the work of anti-racism. Our intent as “well-meaning” white people with the “desire to preach about racism” who make “mistakes” should overshadow the racism and the consequences of our racism we cause.⁷⁰ Moreover, those of us who are white are given a blank check to create as many small increments to anti-racism work as we need to feel comfortable. Case in point, Helsel’s work refuses to claim her argument “works” to “diminish the effects of racism” but rather “begin(s) a conversation” which “over time, can help congregations begin to see or ‘recognize’ racism in a process of working towards an identity of anti-racism. (Underline mine)”.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Ibid., 97.

⁶⁹ Ibid., footnote 18, page 133.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 48-49, 129, 142.

⁷¹ Ibid., 251.

Even more than protecting white people's feelings/fragility is the way Hessel's homiletic makes excuses for our racism due to our inability to overcome the sin of racism on our own and our innate and unimpeachable goodness. Hessel writes, white evangelicals do not "lie or distort truth" to "protect their advantages;" rather, they simply lack the "cultural tools" or "hermeneutical framework" for doing anti-racism work.⁷² We do not perpetrate racism "out of ignorance, denial, or malice" nor being a "bad person or a racist" and that this type of "finger-pointing...serves to hinder whites from approaching the subject of race."⁷³

Our racism as a form of bondage is a dastardly ironic symbol to use for the same oppression which supported and justified the violence of legalized bondage against BIPAL people. Not only that, this definition of racism renounces white people's responsibility for our contemporary acts (and non-acts) of racism, forcing it upon God. God is the only one capable of releasing us from our "repertoire of actions and utterances that have been shaped historically and ideologically by a larger system of racism."⁷⁴ Our entrenched racism, then, "cannot be eradicated by simply a rational rejection of racist beliefs" because "though humans created racism it is not within human power to simply destroy it."⁷⁵ Here, God takes responsibility instead of white people and excuses our sins of racism. Hessel attempts to absolve us further when she uses the word "human" instead of "white people" inferring BIPAL people share responsibility for the system of racism we created.

⁷² Ibid., 126.

⁷³ Ibid., 52, 81-82.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 154-155.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Lastly, whiteness and white people's comfort are (re)centered by using gratitude as the key to this anti-racism strategy. Gratitude holds a two-fold position: [1] it is white people's response to God's gift of providing our healing and ability to be released from the bondage of our sin (racism); and [2] it is our orientation toward BIPAL people. Reminders that "redemption finally must come from God" primes us toward gratitude as this is a gift we cannot give ourselves, nor can we repay in kind or for which feel indebted.⁷⁶ In Helsel's model, sermons about racism teach to us "previously unknown perspectives of others, whose struggles of courage have brought new insight..." and train us how to feel "upon seeing the 'other' as a gift from God."⁷⁷ In other words, those of us who are white should express gratitude toward BIPAL people because their lives serve as sermon fodder.

Gratitude as an anti-racism strategy for white people clears us from responsibility for our racism as we recognize our inability to do what only God can do. Then, we literally use BIPAL people to learn about the racialized trauma our racism has wrought upon them and their families for generations. The seemingly minor yet paradigm-creating term of "non-white" used to describe BIPAL people in Helsel's work perhaps showcases the depth to which whiteness remains centered; deep within a binary between us and those who exist (only) to teach us about their courage and our racism.⁷⁸ The motivation for the impulse to continually separate herself from the racism of other white people might be impossible to secure (consistent use of "their" instead of "our"). However, one might

⁷⁶ Ibid., 157.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 245.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 133, 146.

reasonably guess it stems from a strategy that consistently places responsibility for our racism upon God and others.⁷⁹

Wesley Allen's, *Preaching in the Era of Trump (Jan. 2017)* “is not meant to be an exhaustive socio-political, theological, ethical, or even homiletical analysis of Trump’s presidency. It intends to help to preachers who want to speak faithfully in response to the destructiveness of Trump’s agenda and early days of the presidency.”⁸⁰ Allen does this by presenting preachers with seven broad issues and four preaching strategies, one of which is for preaching about race.

Allen highlights our need to “confess our shock and awe”⁸¹ that we, as a country, voted out of fear and hatred. We must admit that Trump’s rhetoric provided meaning-making to people’s experiences in ways that our preaching has not.⁸² Preachers must also be willing to acknowledge the likelihood of Trump-voting congregation members, both Republicans who voted for the party *and* those who voted for Trump due to their shared values.⁸³ Despite this, preachers could consider this a “horrible” but “divine gift,” which gives the Church the chance to be “great again.”⁸⁴ We can reclaim an “us/them” narrative which “appreciates difference even when we don’t agree.”⁸⁵ Finally, we can hate the sin of racism while loving the sinner who is “caught in a web of systemic racism.”⁸⁶

⁷⁹ Ibid., 13, 48, 49, 122,125 (sample pages).

⁸⁰ O. Wesley Allen, Jr., *Preaching in the Era of Trump* (Saint Louis: Chalice Press, 2017), 3.

⁸¹ Ibid., 6-10.

⁸² Ibid., 11-20.

⁸³ Ibid., 21-27.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 47-56.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 28-36.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 47-46.

Allen’s strategies for white preachers preaching about race include avoiding hyperbole and relying on referenced quotes and information;⁸⁷ dealing with the Church’s historical and contemporary racism;⁸⁸ preaching against racism using both direct and indirect means while limiting sermons with central claims about racism;⁸⁹ and increasing our understanding of racism from individuals to a system in which we are all trapped.⁹⁰

Anti-Racism Strategy Presented

Preaching in the Era of Trump uses both the anti-racism strategies of “meet the people where they are” and the focus on our similarities model often found in intercultural competency training. Mainly, Allen focuses on meeting four sets of people where they are:

1. People who reeled after Trump’s election piercing the “post-racial” era myth,
2. Republican congregation members who voted for Trump because of political party,
3. Congregation members who voted for Trump in agreement with policy/campaign promises,
4. Preachers with congregations whose perspectives span pro-Trump and anti-Trump views.

By focusing on what the people hold in common – to seek to be faithful to God even while having different political views – Allen’s homiletic works to address harmful Trump policies while respecting the dignity of those who voted for him either by party or policy. Allen’s homiletic echoes the work of intercultural competency that emphasizes how our similarities, especially at the level of values, can overcome our differences. In this case, Allen argues that a shared desire to be faithful to God, shared belief in humans created in

⁸⁷ Ibid., 59-63.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 63-65.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 65-70.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 43.

the Imago Dei, and a shared goal of peace over polarization can hold the differences even as sharp as post-election dynamics. Preaching focuses equally on a “range of perspectives”⁹¹ and “speak(ing) faithfully in response to the destructiveness of Trump’s agenda and early days of the presidency.”⁹²

Racism Perpetrated

As with Hessel’s model, Allen’s homiletic perpetrates racism at the strategy and implementation levels. Racism within its strategy will be the primary focus here. In terms of process, Allen bends over backward to accommodate and protect white people’s feelings/fragility, our goodness, and the paralysis that came after Trump’s election despite our belief in a post-racial world. Therefore, even the preaching strategies regarding race that *could* disrupt racism perpetrate it. Relying on referenced quotes/information⁹³ is vital for all preaching. In anti-racism, this works to defund the lies of racism in written history, news, white people’s “common sense,” and many biblical interpretations alike. However, when listed after the instruction to “avoid hyperbole,”⁹⁴ talk about the realities of race and racism which triggers defense in those of us who are white are falsely equated with “political correctness,” “race-baiting,” “sensitivity,” and “making everything about race.” Blanket statements against hyperbole are not only unbiblical (i.e., “...and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!” Matt. 16:19),⁹⁵ but also

⁹¹ Ibid., 2.

⁹² Ibid., 3.

⁹³ Ibid., 59-63, 109.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 108.

⁹⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *English Standard Version* (Wheaton, Ill. Crossway, 2008).

work to shut down real conversations about racism and anti-racism when they “get too much” for those of us who are white.

Preaching about racism using direct means breaks through the euphemisms, dog-whistling, and other forms of “coding” which hide and protect racism within relationships and policies. However, adding “indirect means” and limiting the number of sermons that centralize race waters down the significance of racism’s harm and the importance of interrupting and dismantling it.⁹⁶ Especially within white-dominant organizations, preaching about race and racism easily becomes an “add-on” or “special day” checkbox with urgency only occurring after high-profiled events of racialized terror, including but not limited to a presidential election. Finally, but not exhaustively, increasing awareness of how racism functions both individually and as a system is critical to the work of anti-racism. The imperative limited to raising awareness centers white people’s needs and buttresses our reliance upon white segregation to defend our obliviousness. Those of us who are white notoriously avoid and avert our attention from the realities of racism. To tack on the phrase “in which we are all trapped” as if white people and BIPAL people are similarly positioned within the system of racism blatantly lies about the privileges and protections those of us who are white experience to the detriment of BIPAL people. In addition, this false equivalency attempts to protect white people’s goodness in that we are only replicating racism because we are “trapped” in this horrible system.

⁹⁶ Wesley, *Preaching in the Era of Trump*, 44, 68-69.

Allen's homiletic takes pains to protect white people's feelings/fragility and recenter whiteness demonstrated in the chapters' titles and the book's primary pedagogy. Confessing our shock and awe is directly related to white people's response to Trump's election. While it is possible that some BIPAL people were taken aback by the results of the 2016 presidential election, the language of shock and awe points to the utter disbelief and fundamental disequilibrium of white people. As those protected by the system of racism, it is easy for us to believe the lies that racism has, and continues to, progressively wane as "people know more" and transformation toward the good follow.⁹⁷ Trump and Trump policy supporters hiding in plain sight in a preacher's congregation also reflect a whiteness paradigm. Deciding not to know who is voting in what way is one of the protections that whiteness affords white folks. We put off conversations about for whom people are voting and which policies they support. White preachers, specifically, will cover behind the tax-free status of churches claiming we cannot talk about politics and candidates lest we lose our tax exemption. Interestingly, though, BIPAL churches, especially Black churches have already figured out how to retain both tax exemption and the voice to speak out against racist policies.

One of the most blatant displays of "reaching across the aisle" Allen does to speak to Trump and Trump policy supporters is to name chapter six, "Making the Church Great Again." It is a preacher's creative tool to utilize the language of the day in ways that catch attention and even redefine them as that with which Christians can build the Kin-dom of God. However, even more important is the preacher's responsibility to always and

⁹⁷ Ibid., 6-10.

everywhere refuse to use what Robert Neville calls “broken symbols.”⁹⁸ Broken symbols are language or symbols so destroyed by the hatred and harm associated with them they no longer function in their original capacity. The phrase, Make America Great Again, is explicitly linked with the racist and oppressive policies, language, and promises of Trump’s campaign. More than dog-whistling, this language is an all-out assault upon any of the groups who have been the direct targets of the campaign’s hatred. The use of this language not only points to Allen, and his editors/publisher, as those who are inept at recognizing the harm of the phrase itself but also to the lengths to which Allen’s homiletic will go to make white people’s racism acceptable for the sake of unity while we learn.

The title of chapter six is harmful enough. However, two additional phrases that replicate hate and harm deserve mention. Using the “hate the sin while loving the sinner” mantra replicates hatred and harm aimed toward LGBTQIA folks both inside and outside the church.⁹⁹ This dichotomy, often used to name heterosexism as godly and faithful, demonizes the love lives of people who identify as LGBTQIA. It is not surprising that a homiletic based in racism would pretend as if it is possible to love anyone while ignoring or disparaging (or hating) an intrinsic aspect of one’s identity. The unparalleled audacity appears when the phraseology transfigures to protect racists (white people’s feelings/fragility) when we should be held accountable for that which we enact by choice. Second, only those of us who have no genuine, mutual, or care-filled relationships with

⁹⁸ While symbols have different meaning, references, interpretations, engagements, truth associations, and consequences. The deepest connections between the six characteristics listed reveal a symbol’s best descriptor as divine, dead, or demonic. Robert Cummings Neville, *The Truth about Broken Symbols* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 18-21. I am saying the symbol “Making the Church Great Again” is broken in that it can never be separated from the hate and oppression linked to the symbol “Making American Great Again.” Broken, here, refers to a symbol which cannot stand for positive affiliation directly because of its reference to a symbol of hate.

⁹⁹ Wesley, *Preaching in an Era of Trump*, 38-39.

BIPAL people could ever name the hatred and harm of racism (or any oppression) as “horrible” but “divine gift.”¹⁰⁰ To utilize theological language to imply that God had put forward an opportunity for transformation by creating a harmful and hate-filled situation/environment is not only irresponsible; it is blasphemous. While God can create good *out of* any circumstance, claiming that God enacts hatred and harm as a gift is a despicable definition of the word “gift” and reprehensible use of the power that many give willingly to those of us who preach.¹⁰¹

Will Willimon’s *Who Lynched Willie Earle?* (2017)¹⁰² is an anti-racism homiletic peppered with comparative news reporting, social analysis, and personal testimony, primarily meant for white preachers. Its first four chapters describe and analyze the lynching of Mr. Willie Earle and the preparation, proclamation, and analysis of a sermon with the book’s title preached by white, southern preacher Hawley Lynn. The final two chapters define racism as sin and describe preaching that confronts racism. Willimon writes this book in response to the (2015) events in Charleston as part of his “continuing penance for (his) residual racism” and his “deep, lifelong conviction that white Christians have some work to do.”¹⁰³

Willimon writes that “the most remarkable aspect of Hawley’s sermon... is that it was preached.”¹⁰⁴ In his analysis of the sermon itself, Willimon highlights that to which he will

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 47.

¹⁰¹ I resist including a comprehensive in-text list of racism perpetrated within the homiletic since this section is very long after only highlighting strategy/template. Perhaps a future article could tackle this aspect of critical analysis by focusing on this source alone using an anti-racism interpretive lens.

¹⁰² Will Willimon, *Who Lynched Willie Earle? Preaching to Confront Racism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2017).

¹⁰³ Ibid., xiii-xiv.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 37.

call contemporary white preachers. “Hawley made the invisible visible and publicly addressed the unmentionable in speaking up. Hawley was the moral preacher... answerable to something more significant than the adoration of the congregation or to keeping people placid and unperturbed.”¹⁰⁵ For Willimon, faithful white preachers must be willing to speak against racism and white people’s direct and indirect participation in it.¹⁰⁶

Willimon’s homiletic turns on racism defined as sin while insisting preaching is not primarily about any sin, including racism.¹⁰⁷ As with addiction, racism is an “incurable, terminal disease” requiring an “intervention” by the God who can “liberate us from captivity.”¹⁰⁸ With a theology of repentance more robust than “feeling sorry,” “acceptance of doctrine,” or “willing reception of God’s gracious love for us,” we can enter into the redemptive work of God with “restitution, recompense, (and) reparation.”¹⁰⁹ Sermons capable of confronting racism focus on God’s power to exorcise racism instead of our will power to overcome it,¹¹⁰ utilize our privilege and power to confront racism with “homiletic boldness,”¹¹¹ begin with scripture before engaging social analysis,¹¹² acknowledge the necessity of conversion over moralism,¹¹³ and advantage the pastoral relationship to conduct the prophetic work of anti-racism.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 38-39.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 57.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 70, 80.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 89.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 92-97.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 97-99.

¹¹² Ibid., 99-101.

¹¹³ Ibid., 101-115.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 117-126.

Anti-Racism Strategy Presented

Willimon's anti-racism homiletic focuses on a historical example from which to highlight aspects of anti-racism work upon which to emulate and build. "Meeting the people where they are" models begin with people's beliefs, values, and actions to create pathways from there. This anti-racism model, however, leverages the preacher's leadership currency, starting with the goal to develop a pathway in reverse. Both rely on a strategy of invitational convincing. However, the focus on the goal instead of the present shifts the anti-racism work. Rather than allowing *what is* to dictate how far and how fast to enact the strategy, what *should or could be* establishes the approach.

Willimon's homiletic follows the anti-racism strategy he names and invites those of us who are white to engage both internal and external work. White people cannot simply learn about anti-racism, as if the skills necessary to confront racism lay beyond what we, ourselves, must internally engage. Since white people are the beneficiaries and perpetrators of racism, we must recognize, grow awareness of, repent for, and actively repudiate the ways we participate in racism. In *Who Lynched Willie Earle?* Willimon highlights this not only with the historical account of white preacher Hawley Lynn but also with testimonies from his own life and journey to confront his racism. This scaffolding approach creates an opportunity for the reader to "watch" how Hawley Lynn did the work of anti-racism and a former Bishop of the United Methodist Church, Willimon does it. In this way, the author also attempts to leverage his leadership currency by invitationally convincing other white people to engage in similar journeys for ourselves.

This homiletic challenges white preachers to address racism courageously, boldly, and directly as sin. Rather than capitulate to the preferences or feelings of white congregants, the white preacher has a higher calling and duty to name the realities of racism and the responsibility for which those of us who are white must accept and enact. Similar to Helsel, the racism as sin doctrine reminds white people that the work of anti-racism is not about our feelings – whether regret or good intent. Our job is to confront the realities of racism. We do this by relying on God, the only One who can “liberate” us from the sin of racism and into the work of calling it out with courage and conviction.

Racism Perpetrated

As Willimon’s homiletic invokes us to call out racism, consequently, it makes sense to do the same, here. Examples of racism found in *Who Lynched Willie Earle*, along with sample page references, include but are not limited to:

- white people portrayed as the humble hero (88, 98, 108),
- false equivalencies (39, 51, 103),
- white people as racism’s victims (54, 105),
- centering white people’s feelings/fragility (90, 95, 99, 112),
- amplifying/celebrating mediocrity or the least effort from white people (49, 61, 91),
- white people distancing ourselves from whiteness (108),
- transferring responsibility from white people to God by defining racism as sin (75-76, 78, 111),
- suggesting white people invade spaces meant only for BIPAL people (51-52),
- whitesplaining definitions and depth of racism’s evil (93),
- highlighting some BIPAL people as “exemplars” (92, 107)
- defining a Black person’s work as “eloquent” (92),
- minimizing the harm of racism (64),
- appropriating anti-racism sources from BIPAL people as if white people are targets (95),
- equating allyship with a charity or White Savior model (82),

- white people using BIPAL people for our anti-racism education/salvation (76, 105, 110, 119),
- and the “magical Negro” trope (102-103, 120).¹¹⁵

Racism perpetrated in Willimon’s anti-racism homiletic is prolific and diverse and directly traced to an inherent problem. Recall Allen’s and Helsel’s homiletic models, which “meet the people where they are.” Willimon’s model reverses this by starting with the preacher, who leverages the trust and relationships they have built with the people to reverse engineer a pathway from anti-racism to the present. While this model avoids obstructions of content or timeline developed to cater to white people’s hesitancy to change, it creates another. This homiletic model relies on the preacher’s or homiliteician’s interpretation of anti-racism and what it requires. For those of us who are white, this includes all of our racism and racialized biases. Thus, when used by white people without anti-racist editorial intervention, this homiletic model perpetrates whatever racism we bring to it.

Listing every racist example and combination would exceed this chapter’s capacity. More helpful for the space and energy allotted for a literature review, I believe, are two (2) compound examples of racism perpetrated under the guise of anti-racism, to which I have added ancillary commentary. Within these excerpts, anti-racism words and concepts serve to code racist interpretations and strategies. First, I will introduce the main components and an extended quote. To clarify what and how racism is functioning, I will highlight phrases with their assumptions and implications. These two quotes form a

¹¹⁵ A representational sample of page references are placed in parenthesis at the end of each example for ease of reading and search versus a long list of “ibid’s.”

representative, not exhaustive sample, which could serve as a template for future analysis or a more comprehensive critique of Willimon's anti-racism homiletic.

In this first passage, Willimon shares his thoughts on how contemporary Christians can do better than Hawley Lynn and the people of Grace Church. After a quick-moving description of lynching, the death penalty, racialized segregation of churches, and a reminder that Willimon read James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* in college,¹¹⁶ the text moves to suggestions for contemporary anti-racism work:

White people have some work to do to overcome our fear and (B)lack people have work to do in resisting the effects of white people's fear. Might Grace Church have considered an offering for Willie Earle's mother, as a peculiarly Christian counter to the widespread solicitation for Tom Brown's widow? Might there have been some effort, in a small town like Pickens, for white Christians to learn from (B)lack Christians? Some gesture of sympathy? I wish Hawley had made an effort to have (B)lack people at his community meeting and that he had shown white bodily support for (B)lack Christians by attending and having some of his members accompany him to Willie Earle's funeral and burial. Crossing these racial boundaries, even for Christian worship, was probably inconceivable, proof of what Willie Jennings calls racism's attenuation and perversion of the Christian imagination.¹¹⁷

Multiple anti-racism phrases lead not to their adjectival promise but racism. Yes, those of us who are white must overcome different fears to do anti-racism work. However, none of our work includes telling Black people what they need to be doing – even resisting racism. As the perpetrators, we have absolutely no business telling people who are the direct targets of our oppression and harm how to respond to it. To attempt to do so is hubris and racist.

¹¹⁶ Willimon, *Who Lynched Willie Earle.*, 51

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 51-52.

Willimon, then, moves to ahistorical suggestions for Hawley Lynn's church to teach contemporary white people about our possible anti-racism options. Willimon names how Grace Church could have considered an offering for Mr. Earle's mother as a "peculiarly Christian" action without specifying how this is so. Placed in contrast to the "widespread solicitation" for Tom Brown's widow, it fails to describe why this is anti-racist or how this avoids the false equivalency between Tom Brown's murder (one for which Mr. Earle stood falsely accused) and Mr. Earle's lynching (an extrajudicial racialized terror act). Willimon suggests that white people should learn from Black people what support is helpful. Yet, his very next proposal invites white people to invade Black-only spaces and rituals of grieving, most despicable in the aftermath of a racialized terror event. Lastly, Willimon simultaneously critiques and excuses Hawley Lynn. Lynn falls short for not making an effort to have Black people come to his white-led meeting (gathered to confront white people about their racism) while absolving him for actions "inconceivable" at the time by appropriating the work of (Rev. Dr.) Willie Jennings.

Within five (5) sentences, at least six (6) compounding expressions of racism exist in this quote. Anti-racism-esque language pretends to point to "white people's work," "racialized economic equity," "anti-racism solidarity and presence across lines of racial difference," and "racism as sin/perversion." However, the racist results include whitesplaining, white people leading strategies but not following Black leadership, false equivalencies, the misuse of Black representation, invading all-Black spaces, and excusing white people's racism.

One of the more brazen acts of racism occurs in Willimon's discussion of prioritizing the work of theology over anthropology. In this section, Willimon purports to engage Mr. Ta-Nehisi Coates as interlocutor:

(Mr.) Ta-Nehisi Coates begins his riveting *Between the World and Me* by announcing that he is an atheist. *Between the World and Me* is an honest but brutal, sorrowing, eloquent, hopeless lament over the intractability of American racism. Coates castigates those African Americans who speak of hope and forgiveness. The thoughtful approach to racism is to bow to its invincibility. Eschewing metaphysics or any possibility of God, Coates is unable to plumb the depths of racist evil. He says that for those like him who 'reject divinity,' 'there is no arc... we are night travelers on a great tundra... the only work that will matter, will be the work done by us.' Coates' despair is justified: facing racism without God – with no hope but the work 'done by us' – is hopeless. Then he equivocates, saying, 'Or perhaps, not.' (92-93)

Willimon, first, denounces Mr. Coates' identity by suggesting his motivations for identifying as an atheist are not what they seem. In footnote 2, Willimon writes, 'How can Coates be sure that his atheism, which he *presents* as an act of intellectual rebellion, is not capitulation to the mores of white supremacy?' (italics mine)¹¹⁸ Willimon's audacity is unmatched as he questions Mr. Coates' testimony and attributes it to the internalization of white supremacy. Presumably, we are to believe that a white, Southern, retired Bishop of a white-dominant Christian denomination, who writes this book to repent of his "residual racism"¹¹⁹ is better equipped to discern the identity of a Black author and scholar on race, racism, and anti-racism in the U.S.? That he does so with whitesplaining further cements my critique.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 92.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., xiv.

Willimon next offers his critiques of Coates' approach to addressing racism. Coates' "hopeless lament" is based on his atheism versus the tidal wave of examples set by white Christians that God does not intervene in U.S. racism. Coates' gets it all wrong because he does not believe in God, and thus, "bows" to the strength of racism and does not understand "the depths of racist evil." Willimon cannot conceive any other reason Coates finds a humanism approach to anti-racism more believable than that set forth by white Christians. Finally, Willimon attacks the strength of Coates' convictions describing him as one who "equivocates" while simultaneously unable to see how his use of the term "eloquent" exposes his equivocation between anti-racism and racism.

Not only does Willimon aggressively assert his anti-racism advice upon a Black person, but Willimon sets his racism within in "church nice mean" language at best and condescending paternalism at worst. In doing so, he violates one of the key tenets of anti-racism work by attempting to tell any Black person how to respond to or address racism. Willimon utilizes an oft-used strategy from the logic system of racism: use anti-racism (or churchy) sounding words to perpetrate racism. The irony lies with the inability to discern whether this sampling displays simply the arrogance of racism or the deeply embedded white supremacist ideology of Willimon himself. The overall consistency within the book suggests both.

The vignettes highlighted here represent a compounding and cascading onslaught of racism stemming from its logic and belief systems. The examples and combinations point to a centering not only of whiteness but also of white supremacy. Notions of white people

controlling anti-racism work, including but not limited to judging the character and work of BIPAL people, reeks of our over-inflated sense of entitlement.

Perhaps, it is not surprising that a homiletic starting with the preacher would center the homilician who wrote it. Willimon's journey, accomplishments, shallow mentions of repentance for his residual racism, and even his naming of racism as sin all work to recenter him, his whiteness, and the logic of racism, which has trained each of us who is white. Also, consider the number of editors who read drafts of this work and allowed it to go to print. If nothing else, this homiletic model forces white homilician's and white preacher's racism to the surface when critiqued with an anti-racist lens. At the very least, this book serves as a warning to every white person who attempts to do anti-racism work (preaching, homiletics, activism, etc.). In our method/ology, we must include honorable and ironclad external accountability structures to disrupt and dismantle the racism we predictably perpetrate even while doing work under the moniker anti-racism.

At the Nov. 2017 Society for Biblical Literature, **Carolyn Helsel delivered the paper, "Towards 'Biblical' Preaching about Race and Racism."**¹²⁰ In it, Helsel places the evangelical emphasis of "true" biblical preaching alongside the need for preaching about race and racism.¹²¹ How can "white preachers who come from evangelical communities of interpretation preach about racism amidst the assumption that 'biblical' preaching requires silence regarding social context?"¹²²

¹²⁰ Carolyn Helsel, "Towards 'Biblical' Preaching about Race and Racism," carolynhelsel.com, accessed December 20, 2017. <https://carolynhelsel.com/2017/11/20/towards-biblical-preaching-about-race-and-racism/>

¹²¹ Ibid., 9.

¹²² Ibid., 13.

To begin, Helsel decides to focus on seven (7) tenets of biblical preaching, of which numbers 5, 6, and 7 are beneficial for preaching about race and racism.¹²³ Tenet 5 requires a deep historical investigation of interpretation to discover and address how texts have been used for harm. Tenet 6 recognizes God's work both in the past and the present to redeem humanity, including attending to current forms of oppression and evil. Tenet 7 acknowledges the power of words and the Holy Spirit to work in and through human beings. For Helsel, it is only when we look at the very real harm of racism that has continued through this day, alongside the tenets of evangelical understandings of biblical preaching, that Christian preachers can avoid replicating continuously the racist ideologies found in "biblical" sermons.¹²⁴

To continue, those who require connections between evangelical understandings of biblical preaching and preaching on race and racism can engage in a multi-form action plan:¹²⁵

1. Preach racism as sin.
2. Use scriptures and scriptural themes that name racism.
3. Recognize ourselves within the stories and the connections with how sin contains us.
4. Acknowledge the individual nature and systemic realities of sin and racism.
5. Actualize our gratitude for God's grace which continuously works for our redemption.

By doing so, evangelicals can hold both biblical preaching and the sins of racism within sermons without losing authenticity or the necessity of either. Perhaps, Helsel argues both

¹²³ Ibid., 16.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 17.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 17-20.

implicitly and explicitly; this will remove one hurdle (excuse?) for preachers, white preachers especially, to begin preaching about racism.

Anti-Racism Strategy Presented

Helsel's "biblical preaching" anti-racism model promotes a hybrid. As with Helsel's previous model and that of Allen, this anti-racism homiletic prioritizes "meeting the people where they are" by focusing on her audience's common ground. Starting with a homiletic insistent upon fidelity to biblical texts seeks to create an inroad with white evangelical preachers concerned about how preaching about race/racism remains faithful. "Meeting" place established, Helsel elevates the preachers' sense of who they proclaim to be: biblical (and, thus, faithful) preachers. This coupling between entry point and identity intends to create a sense of ease, especially among those who resist addressing racism. For those who isolate anti-racism work to the political without recognizing its personal or faith connections, Helsel's combination of faithful biblical preaching and biblical preachers' identity as faithful holds the possibility for a potent elixir. This hybrid might be described as both "meeting the people *where* they are" and "meeting the people at *who* they are."

"Towards Biblical Preaching" adds another layer to the hybrid model in terms of the pathway between the present and anti-racism. The "meet the people where they are" model starts with the people's current beliefs, values, and actions. In this case, teaching white evangelical preachers who believe preaching must be faithful to the biblical text how preaching about racism can do just that. The pathway runs from the people to the goal of anti-racism. By highlighting biblical preachers' identity as faithful and connecting that

with preaching about racism, the pathway develops in reverse. Starting with anti-racism preaching, paths connecting back to “*who* the people are” develop. In sum, this homiletic model reverse engineers a pathway from the goal of anti-racism preaching by combining it with the ideal of the people’s proclaimed identity, which is contextualized by starting with biblical preaching (*where* the people are).

Anti-racism work starting with proclaimed identity offers at least two powerful benefits, possibly capable of offsetting some of the limitations with the “meet the people where they are” method. First, many people are hesitant to give up their proclaimed identity. At some level, they have chosen it. They find some sense of worth, value, pride, connection, belonging, tradition, or shared purpose by identifying with it. They live some sense of themselves within it. Thus, identity holds a powerful place in a person’s decision-making matrix. If the preacher finds and articulates legitimate connections between the goal (in this case, anti-racism) and identity, the aspiration moves from “out there” to part of one’s personhood. Second, all oppressions seek to create distance between actions that buttress them and proclamations of identity which condemn them. Take, for example, sexism. It functions to create the greatest distance possible between a man who believes himself to be fair and just and his reasoning never to vote for any woman, presidential candidate. In this way, he can justify not voting for a woman candidate without having his fairness questioned. When anti-racism strategies create learning environments and engagements which place identity and the realities of racism that contradict it side-by-side, it forces a choice between the two. And as was stated earlier, many people do not want to give up their proclaimed identity – especially if the explanation requires their public support of oppression (in this case, racism).

Content specifics within Helsel’s “biblical preaching” homiletic aim toward a number of the main points of anti-racism. The article presents a particular focus on how knowledge about race and racism can uproot biblical texts’ misinterpretation used to justify and propagate racism. In other words, this is an educational model which presumes automatically; different information leads to different decisions/actions.¹²⁶ Connecting this with a central tenet of searching for truth, often found within evangelicalism, creates a tight bond between the work of addressing racism and how the Bible speaks authentically to us today.

Racism Perpetrated

Racism present within Helsel’s “biblical preaching” article stems from strategy and implementation. In review, when protecting white people’s feelings and comfort drive anti-racism content or strategy, the “meet the people where they are” model perpetrates racism. Connecting this with articulated identity, especially one which includes values of justice, places the contrast between what people proclaim to be about side-by-side with current non/actions. Whether people decide to change is not the point. The combined model of “meet the people where they are” and lifting up a proclaimed identity which includes some form of justice, makes clear the alignment (or not) between “where they are” and their identity. However, this combination anti-racism strategy must name specifically what and how the non/actions align or do not. Think about it. If a white person

¹²⁶ “...when you know better you do better.” Widely attributed to Dr. Maya Angelou without original printed source. “The Powerful Lesson Maya Angelou Taught Oprah,” *Oprah’s Lifeclass*, October 19, 2011, video 2:14, [The Powerful Lesson Maya Angelou Taught Oprah - Video](#), accessed October 17, 2021.

is a self-proclaimed Christian and refuses to address racism, they currently believe that a Christian identity does not require addressing racism. Only by applying, directly and specifically, an anti-racism lens to the identity of Christian reveals something new. Without a way to reinterpret the identity through the lens of anti-racism, whatever racism or racialized prejudice is in place, stays in place.

One might argue Helsel provides this reinterpretation by listing aspects of biblical preaching and options for faithful biblical preaching, which addresses racism side-by-side. However, Helsel's homiletic still perpetrates racism in its implementation. If the identity, reshaped by an anti-racism lens, informs "where the people are," transformation occurs. When the momentum of "where the people are" defines the identity, not so. Technically, Helsel's "biblical preaching" model places white evangelical preachers' commitment to biblical preaching, and a way anti-racism preaching can be biblical alongside each other. However, the lack of an anti-racism lens to reinterpret what it means to be a faithful biblical preacher protects racism brought to the task. The same dynamic applies to a hybrid meeting the homilician where they are and anti-racism homiletics.

Centering whiteness is an ongoing problem in Helsel's homiletics. While her work specifically addresses white preachers who preach to primarily white congregations, missing is centering the work of white people without centering whiteness. In the *Recognizing Ourselves in the Story* aspect of Helsel's teaching, she states, "Preaching needs to help white Christians understand how racism impacts them, how they are connected to their brothers and sisters who continue to experience racism, and how their

own spiritual growth is stunted through the system of racism.”¹²⁷ The focus remains on the experience of white people, not the work we must do nor the responsibility we must take. Ironically, as Helsel centers whiteness by focusing white people on how racism affects us, she simultaneously distances herself from her whiteness, choosing the word “them” over the term “us.”

“Biblical preaching” also coddles those of us who are white at the expense of BIPAL people. Helsel’s insistence on recognizing, experiencing, and ending sermons with gratitude shapes this homiletic to make white people feel encouraged (good about ourselves) while addressing racism despite the “different emotions”¹²⁸ it will bring up for us when we do. Helsel does not mention how gratitude functions for BIPAL people. Are all preachers whom Helsel teaches white? Are all of her students pastors of all-white churches? It is possible, sure, but improbable. Also, without mention, is the (possible?) harm inflicted upon the BIPAL congregation members who also hear the sermons about which Helsel teaches. What does it feel like for a person who is a direct target of racism to listen to sermons which address racism but always end with reminders to be grateful for God’s unconditional grace, which saves us from our sins of racism? What does it feel like for BIPAL people to address racism alongside white people whose anti-racism practices require feeling good about ourselves?

SUMMARY

Some anti-racism homiletics written by white people name racism as sin, call out white people for our weak repentance-like words, or challenge those of us who are white to the

¹²⁷ Helsel, “Towards ‘Biblical’ Preaching,” 19.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

responsibility of anti-racism. Yet, in every homiletic analyzed, racism remains. My original assumptions that homiletics perpetrated racism when they compromise the direct naming of racism to ensure the comfort of those of us who are white were challenged. However, presented clearly, even if not explicitly, in each source is the philosophical tautology, “white people are good.” Furthermore, the racism perpetrated in each connects both directly and indirectly to the linguistic and theological gymnastics necessary to protect white people’s goodness at all costs. Rather than amplify how whiteness, white supremacy, and racism creates a both/and reality for white people, our goodness was protected by pretending we do not benefit from the same system we proclaim to want to dismantle. What is needed then, for an anti-racist, anti-racism homiletic, is a “both/and” construction capable of bearing this nuance.

Chapter 2: “Before I Preach, I A.C.T. – An Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology”

Whether we are aware of it or not, all preachers preach our theology. We will nuance it for the context in which we preach, but our theology shows up in our sermons. Universalizing theologies, or theologies which assume the same ideas and values appropriately address every context, pretend as if the contexts out of which we write them are also universal. However, we write theology out of particularity, and bring with it the assumptions that context deems natural, normal, or logical. When we do not articulate context, we force our particularities and place the onus of connection upon each reader and listener. Each one must find how they connect to the theology (or not) rather than the theology connecting to the authentic experiences of readers.

When I first began studying theology, course syllabi did not provide nuances to its name. I initially learned the term, theology, as a placeholder for all talk about and study of God. Various courses or discussions sometimes added the adjective, systematic, to show the study can occur in an orderly fashion that makes logical sense. However, even the terms, “orderly” and “logical,” did not receive investigations for the internalized bias and assumptions they carry. Recent decades have birthed multiple theologies including but not limited to Womanist, Mujerista, Black, Minjung, Feminist, and others, each with multiple waves representing different generations of thought. Many times, we blend the aforementioned together referring to them as liberation theologies. I prefer the term “Articulated Context Theologies” for not all of them place the focus on liberation. The one thing they all have in common is the necessity to name their contextual particularities as critical to “the doing” of said theology. Within these forms of, what Womanist Scholar Dr.

Delores S. Williams names God-Talk,¹²⁹ we cannot do the work of theology outside of specifically naming from where, by whom, and the ways in which it is practiced.

Since all preaching proclaims a theology, an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Homiletic requires an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology to support, nurture, and protect it. Yet, racism can be perpetrated within an anti-racism preaching book, even when racism is named theologically as sin. Consider, for example, the writings of contemporary white homilicians described in the literature review. So then, what does an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology require? First, it must articulate clearly the realities of racism and how it functions. While all people can hold racialized prejudices, the system of racism was created and is sustained to benefit those of us who are white at the expense of BIPAL people. Thus, an Articulated Context Theology (A.C.T.) for Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Preaching must relate directly to the specific “both/and” context of people who benefit from our racism while we simultaneously attempt to interrupt it, of people who proclaim a desire to name our racial privilege while we simultaneously attempt to protect it, and of people who are more afraid of being exposed for our racism than to risk dismantling it. Such a task will require an articulating of whiteness as particularity and the “both/and” of our racial positionality as the context from which we, white folks, perpetrate racism.

An Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology need not start from scratch but must refuse the temptation to appropriate wholesale one A.C.T. for another. Otherwise, we negate the

¹²⁹ Delores S. Williams. *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998), 1.

particularities of each and reinforce white supremacy's notion that everything is at the disposal of white folks. As a foundation for reimagining theology in both content and function, three Articulated Context Theologies come to the forefront: William Cavanaugh's *Torture and Eucharist*,¹³⁰ Serene Jones' *Cartographies of Grace*,¹³¹ and Andrew Sung Park's *The Wounded Heart of God*.¹³² Cavanaugh's work serves to highlight how the Church might reclaim aspects of theology forgotten and surrendered. Jones' work provides a template for prioritizing the universal nature of God's love alongside the particularities of identity positionality and its social-political consequences. Finally, Park's focus amplifies how sin affects differently the oppressor and oppressed while creating a necessary pedagogical bridge for an A.C.T. capable of honorably addressing both.

Torture and Eucharist: Reclaiming Theology with an A.C.T.

When considering Articulated Context Theologies capable of funding an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology for preaching, I am immediately drawn to William Cavanaugh's *Torture and Eucharist*. Cavanaugh's research centers on 1973-1990 Chile under the regime of General Pinochet.¹³³ To avoid oppressive Church policies and structures, Social Catholicism re-crafted its ecclesiology as "the soul" of the community.¹³⁴ Unfortunately, the Church did not realize until it was (almost) too late that the soul of the community had given up its community's physical bodies over to a torturous State. In a contest over

¹³⁰ William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1998).

¹³¹ Serene Jones, *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

¹³² Park, Andrew Sung, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993).

¹³³ Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 2.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

bodies, the State asserted itself as the bearer, sustainer, and taker of life. The Church, who already understood itself as only able to address the soul, also misunderstood its mission as one of unity, peace, and subsuming conflict. Pinochet's Chile was free to treat physical bodies at will, resorting to torture and disappearing to dis-locate any social bodies who would rival its power. Despite initial good intentions, the Chilean bodiless Church found itself incapable of resisting the physical oppression of the State.¹³⁵

One problem inherent in this split of soul and body is that torture is not only a physical act but also one of liturgical imagination. The Chilean State impressed its imagination on the people with torture—a liturgy of fear. By disappearing people, the State stole the Church's martyrs who would keep alive its subversive memory.¹³⁶ With no "body," not even a dead one, there is no witness.¹³⁷ Even for the victims who were returned, the State relied on the incommunicability of pain knowing torture silences bodies despite finding themselves back among their communities. Rebecca Chopp, in *The Praxis of Suffering*,¹³⁸ (is not the only one who) argues suffering is difficult to explain, understand, or represent. I would add, here, neither is suffering an act that people fully forget nor deny. There is something about the experience of the physical or psychological pain of torture that reduces oneself to the level of interiority. No matter how we try to share our experiences,

¹³⁵ Ibid., 4-7, 124.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 15-17.

¹³⁷ Tertullian is famous for saying, "The blood of the martyr is the seed of the Church's witness."

¹³⁸ Rebecca S. Chopp, *The Praxis of Suffering: An Interpretation of Liberation and Political Theologies* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1986), 2.

even if we are able, there is an unbridgeable gulf between those who experience pain and an other.¹³⁹

Torture subsumes stories and steals voices from its victims. While its true purpose is often obscured by political or military language, the purpose of torture is to replace one's story with that of the State.¹⁴⁰ Rather than get at truth, the State actually wants confirmation of what it already believes. "Where is the bomb," could be translated as "We know you know where the bomb is—tell us!" "Admit your allegiance to blah-blah-blah," might actually be code for "Our research shows there is no chance in hell that you are not part of the blah-blah-blah group." Rather than asking questions, the State demands validation of pre-set knowledge. In the torturous State, the martyrs would disappear, and even the bodies who return to community are incapable of sharing their pain, their (own) story, or their voice.

Cavanaugh's retelling intrigues this work because of the way the Chilean Church reframed its ecclesiology by reclaiming its understanding of the power of the Eucharist.¹⁴¹ By attending to realities on the ground, the Church could see the limits of a bodiless ecclesiology and (divinely) realize it had, within its tradition, a liturgy and imagination of its own. The Eucharist—especially in contexts which explicate the power of God's grace within sacraments as tangible—offers a re-union of the soul and body. When considered as a site of spiritual empowerment for physical bodies (God's grace—or body—literally

¹³⁹ I would argue that even when one has experienced the same pain/suffering as an other, there is still a chasm that remains between one experience and the next. Even if it is true, as Martin Buber argues, that God is found in the "between" of two people in a relationship of mutuality, the mediation of God from one to another might be miraculously close but still imperfect. Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1970).

¹⁴⁰ Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 30.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 205-207, 263.

nourishes physical bodies), souls and bodies experience reuniting and empowerment for resistance to all forms of enslavement, including a torturous State. The Eucharist remembers Christ's body, feeds Christ's body to contemporary bodies, and empowers those bodies to do the work of Christ in the world. Physically souled bodies now serve as primary sites of resistance, irrupting into and reconfiguring public spaces. In Chile, "bodily street liturgies" would name the disappearing—reclaiming "space" for them in their absence.¹⁴² The State may disappear bodies, but they would not leave the Church without a witness because physical bodies literally stood in the streets announcing them to the world. While fear might remain, hope replaces fear as the "really real" and God replaces the State's (pseudo) omnipotence.

The Chilean Church fell prey to a theology which devastated her understanding of herself, and most important but not independently, violated and destroyed individuals, families, and communities. The Church forgot who she was, and the people paid the price. It was the unification of the soul and body, both created out of and because of the Church's particularity, which empowered the Church and people to resist the torturous State under General Pinochet's control. A faithful and particularized enactment of an A.C.T. corrected a deadly theology. We can do the same for a Church in desperate need of an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism A.C.T. by a reclaiming of its own. Here, those of us who are white must reclaim guilt and shame as theological goods.

¹⁴² Ibid., 274-275.

Reclaiming Guilt & Shame for an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology

Guilt and shame¹⁴³ have oft been vilified in the work of anti-racism by those of us who are white. Guilt is reduced to an external motivator capable only of a robotic mimicking of false transformation of heart or mind. The definition of shame equates it with attacking one's personhood in ways that either paralyze one's capability for change or defile one's understanding of their humanity. We have relegated guilt to making someone feel bad about what she or he has done and shame to making someone feel bad about who she or he is. We construct both without including the consequential realities of racism for BIPAL people. Those of us who are white are quick to name the uncomfortable feelings of being exposed for our racism without ever really dealing with any guilt or shame over our participation in and perpetuation of it.

Reasons for this are many, but one we must attend to is the misuse and overuse of guilt and shame by the Church throughout history. The Church has used guilt to raise finances, to demand repentance before authentic transformation, and even to serve on committees. The Church has used shame to death-march BIPAL people, the LGBTQIA community, women, children, people of other faiths and of good conscience, people with disabilities, and others by denying their full humanity if they did not conform to codes rewarding primarily white, cis-gendered men. Rather than considering how God uses the emotions of guilt and shame to help humans find our way back to our created-selves as good, the Church has repeatedly been lazy by administering them as fear tactics of manipulation for her own self-centered purposes. Thus, calls for the elimination of guilt and shame as

¹⁴³ Ernest Kurtz defines guilt as "a fault of doing" and shame as "a fault of being." Ernest Kurtz, *Shame & Guilt* (New York: iUniverse, Inc., 2007), 5.

motivators for anti-racist change, seem faithful and healthy based on the Church's use, oft producing a legacy of harm.

However, the Church's laziness, greed, and selfishness should not limit God's use of guilt and shame as anthropological course-correctors. What if we considered, theologically, that God created within humanity a fail-safe measure meant to help us recognize in what ways we are becoming what we are not to assist our return to who we are? If this is the case, perhaps guilt helps us see how our values, beliefs, or in/actions do not align with who we have been created and called to be. Shame, similarly, would help us see how we are becoming less and less of ourselves—less human—because of those values, beliefs, or in/actions.

In terms of anti-racist anti-racism work, this would mean that those of us who are white *should* feel guilt and shame as it relates to our perpetrating and protection of racism. God would use our emotions of guilt and shame to help us recognize how our individual and institutional racism defiles our humanity. For example, as white folks perpetuate racism, we give up portions of our empathy—a key aspect of our humanity. As our empathy wanes, those of us who are white forfeit our ability to see others as human and worthy of safety, compassion, and thriving. As we see other humans as less-than-human, we enact sins against them we would never consider against other image-of-God-bearers, including but not limited to racism.

By reclaiming a God-centered theological anthropology of guilt and shame, we refuse to reduce these powerful emotions to fear-based tactics of the Church. Rather, those of us

who are white embrace the correction of a grace-filled God who loves us enough to tell when we are wrong and to help us back toward our created goodness. Just as the Eucharist did for the Chilean Church, guilt and shame in this light help white people be remembered by God. We, as white folks, desperately need to reclaim wholeheartedly guilt and shame as theological goods. If we should not feel guilty nor ashamed over our participation in and protection of racism, what harm would be harmful enough for us to do so? Guilt and shame help white people to stop doing that which destroys our humanity and which works to destroy BIPAL people. Guilt and shame help us re-member who we have been created and called to be. Finally, but not exclusively, guilt and shame serve to teach people racialized as white that our human-constructed, racialized privilege does not hinder the God of the universe. God, who “shall not be mocked”¹⁴⁴ nor infinitely patient with the oppressor, will ensure that justice shall prevail. White people must decide with commitment and steadfastness, whether we will heed divine warnings via guilt and shame or suffer the consequences of our disobedience.

How should we, then, address concerns describing guilt and shame as ineffective external motivators, paralyzing those of us who are white from any action or transformation at all? The work of Søren Kierkegaard provides some suggestions. In *The Sickness unto Death*, Kierkegaard lays out three (3) ways we can think about despair.¹⁴⁵ Eric Severson provides an accessible description of Kierkegaard’s three-fold definition of despair from which the

¹⁴⁴ Galatians 6:7 “⁷ Make no mistake, God is not mocked. A person will harvest what they plant.”

¹⁴⁵ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening*, edited and translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University, 1980).

following paraphrase emerges.¹⁴⁶ Kierkegaard's first way to think about despair focuses on the feelings we often associate with it. In its most reductive sense, sadness represents this understanding of despair. Happiness eludes us and, as despair continues in time and/or deepens in strength, we may feel as if happiness shall never return to us. Despair of this sort makes us feel bad, and examples of the multiple ways humans attempt to stave off these types of feelings abound. In anti-racist anti-racism work with white folks, this understanding of despair creates in us a seemingly unbearable temptation to deny or distance ourselves from our racism to avoid being charged with it. Despair as unhappiness or bad feeling also leads those of us who are white to perform a few visible anti-racism protocols without doing the harder work of personal transformation to the point of tangible risks and sacrifice.

A second understanding of despair for Kierkegaard is that which echoes the concerns about guilt and shame paralyzing people from any action at all. Despair expresses itself as the urge to turn one's face away. In contrast to the application of despair in the above paragraph showcasing how white people experience despair as sadness or bad feeling in anti-racist anti-racism work, despair expresses itself as denial, here. Despair bypasses "feeling," and creates a guttural urge to turn away from "seeing"—let alone responding to suffering. White people allow despair over our increased awareness of racism and its consequences, or even over the possibility of being thought of as racist, to overwhelm us to the point of inaction/no action. We attempt to protect ourselves as turtles with shells;

¹⁴⁶ My rendition of Severson's descriptions of Kierkegaard's three-fold understanding of despair also can be traced to multiple lectures of his I attended when he was a professor and I a student at Eastern Nazarene College, Quincy, MA. Eric R. Severson, *Scandalous Obligation: Rethinking Christian Responsibility* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2011), 9-10.

if I do not see it—it is not there. If I do not acknowledge it—I can ignore it. In anti-racism work, white folks experiencing despair as turning away also obstruct speed of timelines or whitewash content, both consciously and subconsciously, in any attempt to deny our racism and avoid despair. These two forms of despair (sadness/feeling bad and denial) both describe the “sickness which leads to death” for Kierkegaard. However, Kierkegaard argues there is another form of despair: “the sickness which leads to life.”

For Kierkegaard, the third form of despair is that which drives us back to God. Recognizing we cannot ever be good enough on our own, we crave relief which can only come from beyond ourselves. This form of despair creates in us, a willingness to experience the bad feelings with a simultaneous strength to push beyond paralyzation. Kierkegaard argues, this form of despair is God-given to provide humanity with a way to come back to life—true and eternal life. For those of us who are white, this form of despair does not spare us feeling badly about our participation in and protection of racism, nor does it allow us the racialized privilege of paralysis. Rather, the despair that leads to life creates in us the impetus and ability to tap into, by God’s grace, what it will take to interrupt and dismantle racism, especially when it requires us to surrender our own privileges, reputation, and benefits. It is in this form white people can understand guilt and shame as divine goods which provide the experience of despair driving us to God for the strength, the courage, and the will to do what is human and what is right.

Cartographies of Grace: Particularizing Theology with an A.C.T.

Serene Jones' *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace* presents a double hermeneutic: gendered human experience and Christian tradition.¹⁴⁷ Using feminist theory, she admits though gender is constructed, its construction is real and affects how we understand God and God's relationship with us. From the Christian tradition, one of her examples focuses on justification and sanctification.¹⁴⁸ Briefly stated, justification is a state of forgiveness after being divinely made right with God or returned to a right relationship with God. Sanctification is defined as becoming (being, being made) holy, or divinely made whole in God. For much of the male-sanctioned and written Christian tradition, a person first comes before God in repentance and in need of justification, after which, one is ready for sanctification in which one becomes and is capable of a life holy and whole in or before God. Jones argues that this ordering is a gendered "map" of grace.¹⁴⁹ Considering the different social constructions of male and female genders, the map requires reconsideration.

Because gender constructions impinge upon our lived selves, Jones insists primary sins are gendered. For men, who benefit from privileges of explicit and implicit patriarchy, and entrenched expressions of a status quo comfortable privileging men, their primary sin is pride—or over-inflating themselves in such a way they subsume others. For women, who men exclude from (primary) patriarchal privilege, who sacrifice themselves, and who others depreciate, their primary sin is the opposite of pride—the no-self. Thus, our

¹⁴⁷ Jones, *Cartographies of Grace*, 15.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 49-68.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

primary sins are gendered, and thus different, though much of canonized Christian thought universalizes the doctrines and ordering of justification and sanctification.

Jones argues since God's grace attends to needs, it makes little sense that with different needs, God would not express God's grace in various ways as well. Her remapped cartographies of grace retain the justification/sanctification order for men while reversing it for women. She argues the original (sanctioned) ordering attends and refers to men's primary sin, pride. Men will come to God in repentance for pride and forgiveness by God, which is justification. After men come into rightness with God, they (depending on the tradition) will receive sanctification, live into sanctification, or both. This ordering does not work for the no-self. God's grace cannot attend to the need for a self by asking or forcing a no-self to repent for overextending a self (pride). Women come first before God with a need to be, depending on the tradition, made or capable of becoming whole selves—sanctification. After which, women come before God in need of the grace of justification when or if they overextend their newly whole selves and impinge upon others. God's graces of justification and sanctification each keep their "primary" purpose—forgiveness and wholeness/holiness. But gendered constructions of lives and, consequently primary sins, switch the order to attend not to a prior theological understanding but to that of which we are in divine need. Jones' particularizing the ways by which we come to God's grace provides a map of its own for an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology.

Particularizing Race for an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism A.C.T.

As Jones recognizes the need to particularize the order of justification and sanctification based on gendered experiences, an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology must address the

reality of racialized experiences. To bring back to the fore, an Articulated Context Theology must name specifically its context, refusing the temptation to universalize experiences, “God-talk,” or perspectives. As *Cartographies* did with gender, an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology must particularize race and how it creates different lived realities for BIPAL people and those of us who are not. While race does not have a biological base, the consequences of a racialized hierarchy are real. Thus, we experience the world based on our race, as does the world experience us. Because the system of racism privileges those of us who are white to the detriment of BIPAL people, our experiences and perspectives will be different. Since white people created the system of racism to shield and make sense to us, we also have blind spots to our own perpetration of racism oft easily recognizable to BIPAL people. A theology must address this particularity of race if it is to qualify not only as an Articulated Context Theology but also an anti-racist, anti-racism one.

As was readily clear in the review of anti-racism homiletics written by white folks, one example of racism perpetrated includes a flattening out across lines of racial differences. Homiletic arguments stated or inferred the truest of human experiences, our perspectives, and even our ethical responsibilities are equal, and thus, the same. Yet, they are not. The creation and sustainability of systematic racism exists precisely because of its protection by white supremacy. Those of us who are white live and see the world through a different lens. We also receive protection from cushions of benefits, access, benefit of the doubt, resources, and a multitude of overlapping unearned privileges. The hardships white people face in life are not based in our racial designation. We can step into (or out of) anti-racism work because we are not the direct targets of racism. Fighting

against racism is not a requirement for our surviving or thriving. All systems of oppression function simultaneously as opaque, invisible, and logical to the oppressor. Thus, those of us who are white are also the least likely to recognize and admit the reality and power of racism's leverage.

The system of racism rewards not only people who become racialized as white, but also whosoever is accepted by or acceptable to "whiteness." Those most closely aligned with whiteness (in skin color, attributes, power, behavior, etc.) receive more privileges and protections from the system of racism. In other words, BIPAL people can and sometimes do receive partial benefits from the system of racism the more closely they align or are seen as aligning with whiteness. All the while, BIPAL people survive and thrive despite and under the constant threat of racism. Hardships often compound the consequences of racism, none the more so when amplified by systemic manifestations. As direct targets of racism, BIPAL people can literally see the system of racism and its expressions much more easily than those of us racialized as white.¹⁵⁰ Based on race, we live, live within, and live despite racism depending on our racialized status.

¹⁵⁰ A scene from the first Harry Potter movie displays this clearly. It is a Sunday. Harry's uncle has spent the last week and untold creative evil ensuring that Harry does not receive his invitation from Hogwarts School of Magic. This morning, he sits with his wife, son, and in front of Harry, who is standing serving the family cookies. The uncle says, "Sunday, best morning of the week. Do you know why Dudley?" His son, Dudley shrugs his shoulders without a clue. Harry, however, knows immediately and speaks up: "Because there's no post (mail) on Sunday?" His uncle repeats, "Correct, there's no post on Sunday, ha!" Dudley, having nothing ever withheld from him, nor at the mercy of his father's abuse, has no idea what his father is talking about. The days of the week mean nothing to him. They represent another period of unending time when his entitlement to his every wish and desire is met. For Harry, in contrast, Sunday represents the one day of the week where his invitational letter is not expected. One day of the week where he won't experience the disappointment and frustration of his letter stolen by his uncle. Having been thwarted by his uncle in this way, he is acutely aware to what his uncle refers when he brings up the day of the week being "the best." Chris Columbus, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (United States: Warner Bros., 2001), https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0241527/?ref=fn_al_tt_1.

With this in mind, a double hermeneutic helps to ground an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology: that of racial positionality and Christian theology. Here, also, race is a construct with consequences that are very real and affect how we understand God and God's relationship with us. Before detailing how race, racism, and anti-racism adjust gendered cartographies of grace, here is a quick reminder of justification and sanctification. Justification is a state of forgiveness after repentance and assists persons to be divinely made right with God or return to the right relationship with God. Sanctification is becoming (being, being made) holy, or divinely made whole in God. As aforementioned, Jones describes the male-centered map as one in which a person first comes before God in repentance and in need of justification, after which, one is ready for sanctification in which one becomes/is made/is capable of a life holy and whole in or before God. For Jones, this map is gendered and must be reconsidered taking into account distinct realities for male and female genders, which results in a switching of order from justification/sanctification to sanctification/justification respectively for men and women.

When considering Jones' maps for white people and BIPAL people, adjusted in terms of the system of racism,¹⁵¹ similarities readily appear. Just as gender constructions impinge upon our lived lives, so also does race. Primary sins are racialized, then, depending upon how racism either benefits or targets us. White folks benefit from privileges of explicit and

¹⁵¹ At this point, intersectionality has not been discussed. Outside of purely theoretical constructs where race can be separated from all other aspects of identity and racism from all other expressions of oppression, reality dictates we must attend to multiple and overlapping spheres of protection and targeting. However, at this point of the narrative, I am making a direct connection with Jones' work which separates gender and sexism from all other identity markers and oppressions. Intersectionality as reality will be introduced with Andrew Sung Park's work in the next section, but would need a fuller treatment in a subsequent book.

implicit racism, and entrenched expressions of a status quo comfortable with privileging us. Our primary sin is the over-entitled self or the over inflating of what we deserve in such a way that steals from BIPAL people. BIPAL people experience exclusion from (primary) racialized privilege.¹⁵² Yet, white supremacy expects BIPAL people to martyr themselves for the continuation of the system that “comforts” white people, as it posits a white hegemonic reality on them. White supremacy undervalues BIPAL people; thus, their primary sin might be named the under-entitled self.

As was stated before, if we accept Jones’ argument that God’s grace attends to needs, different needs require different expressions of grace. In the case of an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology, a remapped cartography would retain the justification/sanctification order for those of us who are white while reversing it for BIPAL people. The original (long-standing) ordering attends most faithfully to the sin of the over-entitled self – that of white people. Those of us who are white will/should come to God first in repentance for over-entitlement, for forgiveness by God – justification. After having been made right with God, white folks then, depending on tradition are sanctified, live into sanctification, or both. This ordering, however, does not work for the under-entitled self. God’s grace cannot attend to the need for healthy entitlement (wholeness) by forcing the under-entitled self to repent for overinflating what they deserve (entitlement). Consequently, BIPAL people would come first before God with a need to be made or capable of becoming healthily-entitled selves – sanctification. After which, BIPAL people come before God in

¹⁵² Here I am referring to the discussion of alignment with or being seen as aligning with whiteness from page 88. This does not, in any way, attempt to subvert the reality that the system of racism exists to privilege white people to the detriment of BIPAL people.

need of justification when/if they overinflate their entitlement and steal from others. God's graces of justification and sanctification each retain their primary purpose – forgiveness and wholeness/holiness. However, racialized constructions of lives, and consequently primary sins, adjust the order to attend not to a prior theological understanding but to that of which we are in divine need.

Before moving onto the work of Andrew Sung Park and a reimagining of God's grace, I will share a few words on equity and equality. Equality contends everyone deserves or receives the same amount. Equity asserts that equality is the goal, but that an injustice has occurred, has been occurring, or continues to occur that makes equality impossible without the redistribution of goods or benefits. For example, imagine one white child with five (5) blocks and one Cherokee child with two (2). There are 10 additional blocks to distribute. Equality says five (5) blocks go to each child, leaving the white child with 10 and the Cherokee child with seven (7). If no matter how many times, and in what quantities, each child receives an equal amount, the white child will always have more than the Cherokee child. This is because of the original (and perhaps ongoing) inequality of blocks.

Equity would first give the Cherokee child an extra three (3) blocks to even the playing field. Out of the 10 additional blocks, seven (7) would remain. Equality would say that none of the children receive the left-over blocks because an equal split is impossible and that would be "unfair." Racism says the extra blocks go to the white child because she deserves it more. Equity would say that because the Cherokee child went so long with three (3) fewer blocks than the white child, she was at a disadvantage unable to be

rectified by one instance of equaling the totals. Equity might argue that for generations, those missing three (3) blocks had compounded the inequity by interfering with her schooling, economic opportunities, loan interest rates, housing choices, treatment within the legal system, and more. Thus, the extra blocks should go to her to *begin* the process of reparations (repair).

By taking seriously racial positionality, equity and equality, plus Jones' remapping of justification and sanctification based on primary sins, we also avoid creating a harmful false equivalency. BIPAL people who resist racism and claim or demand reparations do not require justification (forgiveness). The newly restored self is not in need of forgiveness for requiring the equity necessary for the socio-economic-political world to make tangible what has occurred in the spiritual. Explicit differences exist between this and the over-entitled self of those of us who are white over-inflating our sense of what we deserve. In fact, equity demands that justification for BIPAL people would never be necessary for any aspect of reparations. Equity is always unequal, but it is always just. Justification restores a person to just relationship with God. A BIPAL person seeking, fighting for, and demanding equity is seeking, fighting for, and demanding what is just (which is exactly what "just" is, justice).

The Wounded Heart of God: Reimagining Theology with an A.C.T.

Jones' work universalized God's graces of justification and sanctification but particularized the ordering based on gendered constructions and consequential primary sins. The Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology suggested above highlights racial positionality instead of gender in conversation with Christian tradition. The

justification/sanctification ordering would be reserved for white people because our primary sin is the over-entitled self. The reverse, sanctification/justification, attends to BIPAL people refusing an identity of an under-entitled self. Andrew Sung Park's *The Wounded Heart of God* also uses a double hermeneutic: [1] an Asian experience, especially that of Han, as a source of theology, and [2] Christian tradition, especially the doctrines of sin and salvation.

Han,¹⁵³ an Asian cultural term often described as “the cry that is never heard,” is an expression for and of suffering. Han is often systemic, generational, and seemingly omnipotent and omnipresent. In its active form, its expression includes anger or desire for revenge. In its passive form, Han is a submissive giving up or despair.¹⁵⁴ For those of us less familiar with Asian culture, we might imagine what the last generation of enslaved Israelites in Egypt felt like right *before* any hope of an exodus would manifest. No one living remembers first-hand what freedom feels like, even the generational stories have become clouded with doubt or despair. The hope found in the acts of God their ancestors once experienced has shriveled into a hardened realism that suffering is their lot. One might understand the 399th year as the year of Han.

Park argues that Western theology has been preoccupied by sin and its reversals.¹⁵⁵ Salvation, therefore, has concentrated mostly on how God plans to restore those who sin

¹⁵³ “Han can be defined as the critical wound of the heart generated by unjust psychosomatic repression, as well as by social, political, economic, and cultural oppression. It is entrenched in the hearts of the victims of sin and violence, and is expressed through such diverse reactions as sadness, helplessness, hopelessness, resentment, hatred, and the will to revenge.” Park, *Wounded Heart of God*, 10.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 15-20.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

over and against someone else. Park defines the Christian theological understanding of Han as the wound left over by someone else's sin.¹⁵⁶ It makes little sense, for Park, that God would require those who suffer Han to repent for the wounds of someone else's¹⁵⁷ sin. Park uses the category of sinner to represent those who sin over and against an other and cause Han. Park uses the category of sinned-against to represent those wounded by someone else's sin and who suffer Han. Similar to Jones' remapping of God's graces of justification and sanctification, Park's remapping of God's salvation for the sinner and sinned against allows for Christian theology to address salvation for both those who have caused and those who suffer Han, but in different ways. Park addresses the fluidity of sin (Han), arguing the reality of sin and Han is cyclical rather than a strict binary of hierarchy. The prime goal of his work, however, serves to remove the false equivalency between divine grace of salvation for those who cause harm and those who suffer it.

Park's categories of sinner and sinned-against also have currency for an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology. In Park's work, these categories are held within Asian cultures, intra-racially. Yet, sinner/sinned-against positionality remains its heart and refuses the weight of Christian theology which attempts to flatten the realities of people's lives and experiences. Jones' work, when nuanced, asserts racial positionality is necessary because we experience the world and the world experiences us differently based on the consequences of white supremacy and racism. It protects white people within the system of racism and our over-entitled selves cause pain, harm, and suffering as we steal what we

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Because Han can be caused by both personal and/or communal sin, the term "else" could indicate an individual, institution, or system.

do not deserve from BIPAL people. BIPAL people are the direct targets of the system (and all expressions) of racism and suffer the pain and harm of over-entitled selves stealing resources, privileges, and even life from them. While Jones' work remaps justification and sanctification by adjusting the order based in gender, Park reimagines the miracle and realities of salvation based on whether someone's primary positional experience is that of sinner or sinned-against. In an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology, grace could be reimagined based on racial positionality, specifically the "both/and" racial positionality of those of us who are white. Those of us who perpetrate racism and its tangible and incalculable consequences receive a grace which *both* demands accountability *and* *accepts* its possibility to us freely and without condition.

Reimagining Grace for an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism A.C.T.

For some Christians, especially those who follow a Wesleyan understanding of God primarily as One-who-loves, the power of grace to heal and save humans creates opportunities for hope. Historically, the Wesleyan understanding of grace was first understood in response to a time when people considered God's grace of salvation as outside of human epistemology. God would decide on the salvation fate of each person based on a perfect system of justice, even if never understood by humans. Humans trusted the perfect God to make perfectly just decisions but did not know whether they were doing good or being saved. Spiritually it might be one thing to trust God with full dependence, but existentially it wears on the human spirit to be under the constant, watchful, and unyielding eye of a perfect judge. People despaired under the weight of mistakes, worrying that unintentional sin would damn them to hell.

The Wesleyan understanding of grace, offered by a God understood primarily through the lens of love, provided a way for imperfect humans to strive toward the good without breaking under the burden of our own failings. Yes, people would sin, but the God of love understood the difference between willful sin and sins unintentionally committed. People felt freedom within this new theology, including but not limited to the freedom from sin. Humans understood grace as God's power of love to surround humanity with the possibility of salvation. Prevenient grace was present even before humans would recognize it for themselves. Saving grace provided the forgiveness from inevitable sin making possible salvation into eternity. Sanctifying grace created opportunities for growth into who humans have been created and called to be: good.

Over time, though, human attempts to protect our sin and our goodness despite our sin can corrupt even grace and co-opt it. Grace, when employed to avoid responsibility for sin and the consequences of sin, can become a weapon. Instead of grace helping people see how unintentional sin need not create soul-crushing despair, grace is sometimes used to wipe away our responsibility and accountability for sins. Within anti-racism workshops, white people see an opportunity to call for prayer as soon as we realize and feel uncomfortable with our racism. Reminders of humanity's brokenness and God's unconditional grace perpetrate schemes to avoid our responsibility for committing and protecting racism rather than drawing us closer to God-given opportunities to dismantle it. Grace becomes a weapon attempting to reduce white people's responsibility for our acts of racism and the privileges we may not have created, but from which we certainly benefit. What began as a theology to help humans realize our created nature and potential

to be and do good, has often been manipulated by white people to avoid what it takes to live increasingly honorably into the goodness to which we have been created and called.

Within Christian history, there are other examples of reimagining grace after it has been used to perpetrate oppression and protect oppressors. During the Third Reich, the German State Church allowed Hitler to co-opt her. Aligning the rhetoric, ideals, and goals of Hitler's Germany, the German Church was indistinguishable from the Third Reich. The Church would wholeheartedly welcome the soldiers and government leaders, offer them Communion, and give them powerful leadership roles. Condemnation never uttered from the pulpit further strengthened explicit and implicit identification with the State and created a false equivalency between the Gospel and government, and ultimately the State Church, Hitler, and Jesus the Christ.

Highlighted often for their resistance during this time are Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Both remained resolute in their theologies of separation between the State and Jesus the Christ but whose lives traveled different paths. Barth moved to the United States where he would formalize theology which insisted that God teaches humans—not the other way around. Humans receive divine knowledge from God; otherwise, we corrupt the divine nature and wisdom of God, who calls us into building a (Kin-dom) of justice and righteousness. Bonhoeffer, however, stayed in Germany, writing extensively as his roles of resistance transfigured among pastor, teacher, writer, revolutionary, prisoner, and four days before the Concentration Camp at Flossenbürg would receive freedom, martyr. Bonhoeffer's steadfast commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ even transformed his stalwart pacifist stance to that of a participant of a failed murder attempt

of Hitler. When considering the reimagining of grace for an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology, Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship* springs to mind. In it, he explicates how Hitler's Germany had corrupted not only the Church but German Christians' understanding of the divine gift of grace. He lays out two ways of thinking about it: Cheap Grace and Costly Grace.¹⁵⁸

Though only the latter descriptor drives the Gospel, each starts with healthy theology. Cheap Grace is the understanding of God's unconditional love which offers to us that which we do not deserve. Grace is a pure gift from God and made possible by the death of Jesus. Jesus died so God could forgive humans after having sinned and blemished our ability to have eternal life. While we might have differing interpretations on *why* Jesus died, Costly Grace up to this point highlights God's unconditional love, grace as an undeserved gift, and Jesus' work to restore humanity to relationship with God. So far, so good. But here's the rub. This form of grace becomes cheap when all actions, no matter how harmful or heinous; no matter the sincerity or presence of repentance, are forgiven. The German Church and Christians under her purview had subsumed the divine gift of grace such that the actions of the Third Reich remained permissible. In this way, soldiers, leaders, even bystanders remained eligible to receive Communion, to receive pardon from the Church in the name of God, and to escape accountability for sin and evil committed or ignored. Cheap Grace exploits God's gift with a false loophole as a ticket to sin without limitation or consequence.

¹⁵⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1959), 43-56.

In contrast, Bonhoeffer argues, exists Costly Grace. Costly Grace also highlights God's unconditional love, grace as an undeserved gift, and Jesus' work to restore humanity to relationship with God. However, Costly Grace remembers to accentuate what it cost Jesus to do so. The divine gift of grace might be unconditional, but it came at a great price to God. Jesus suffered and died on a cross, through no sin of his own, to make humans right with God. By pretending or assuming this creates free license to sin (Cheap Grace) we spit in the face of Jesus as he hangs from the cross for us. Costly Grace places to the forefront how much it cost God to create the possibility of a divine gift capable of restoring humans to our humanity and eligibility for eternal life. And as such, we avoid sin, look to live righteously, and repent genuinely with a faithful disbelief that God would offer us such a gift despite proving with our sin that we do not, nor could ever, deserve it. Bonhoeffer says Costly Grace is the type of grace revealed by God through God's Word (Jesus) and God's words (Bible). Costly Grace is true grace and that to which the Church must also be accountable.

As the Bonhoeffer descriptors of grace in Third Reich Germany distinguish between a false idol (Cheap Grace) and faithful Christianity (Costly Grace), we can do the same with an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology for today. While it would be easy enough to transfer Bonhoeffer's terms to the context of this work, it would not be entirely faithful. As aforementioned, each Articulated Context Theology must articulate its own context and refuse the temptation to take wholesale the theology of another context as if a perfect fit. Here, the basis of the descriptors Cheap Grace and Costly Grace still apply in the following ways. First, those of us who are white often call upon God's grace not in terms of repentance but to demand forgiveness without repentance (Cheap Grace). Second, to call

upon grace to feel better about ourselves when made aware of our sin or our sinful actions makes a mockery of the miracle God creates to restore us to our created goodness (Cheap Grace). Finally, but not exhaustively, the type of grace necessary to interrupt and dismantle racism by those who perpetrate and are protected by it must be precipitated by a repentance that takes seriously all that God does or has done to restore us to proper divine relationship and our own humanity (Costly Grace). The differences which remain are better served with new nomenclature to focus attention on a grace of responsibility for white folks who consistently trade our humanity for a bowl of poisoned stew.¹⁵⁹

The terms necessary for an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology must both attend to true repentance and the cost of what is at stake when we flippantly use grace for our own selfish means. However, for an Articulated Context Theology for white folks attempting to do anti-racism work, grace must also hold us robustly and unswervingly accountable to the cost exacted upon BIPAL people because of our unwillingness to interrupt and dismantle racism. Cheap and Costly Grace focus on the impact upon the Divine. I am suggesting two theologically anthropological terms which focus on in/actions and risk-avoidance or risk-taking of white people, specifically as it relates to our perpetration of or dismantling of racism.

¹⁵⁹ “A bowl of poisoned stew” is a reference to the story between Jacob and Esau when the eldest son trades his birthright for a bowl of stew because he could only think of his present hunger. Genesis 25: 27-34.

I first read the term, Cowardly Grace, in an article quoting the Rev. Osagyefo Sekou after the Charlottesville Unite the Right rally and counter-protests of August 2017.¹⁶⁰ Rev. Sekou is often recognized for his resistance work in Ferguson after the murder of an unarmed Black teenager, Michael Brown. Congregate C'ville brought Sekou into Charlottesville. This group would help to organize clergy from around the nation to counter-protest the Unite the Right rally. As a master activist, he trained and gathered clergy in what the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called "militant, non-violent, direct action."¹⁶¹ Rev. Sekou taught strategy and led tactics with simulations, centering meditations, and resistance-focused worship to steel resolve and prepare hearts for the likelihood of arrest, injury, or death. As the counter-protestors marched into the rally, Rev. Sekou led "movements" of resistance with song, chants, direct action formations, and survival strategies. His method was logical and threefold. First, resolve in your heart to do the hard thing before you get to the protest site; if you can't "hold the line," sit this one out. Second, non-violent protest is not passive; it is active, tangible, meaningful, and powerful. Third, sometimes those who are labeled right are wrong (Unite the Right) and sometimes those labeled as wrong are right (Antifa).¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ I have searched all over for this article and cannot find it. I even reached out to Rev. Sekou via FB messenger and asked him if he remembered the article and he couldn't recollect its specifics either but thought it was possibly a BBC interview with Jane Little, correspondence July 6-7, 2018.

¹⁶¹ Credited by Rev. Sekou to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. during training.

¹⁶² During the ramp up for the Unite the Right rally and counter-protests, Antifa, a leftist group willing to use violence against violence when necessary, was painted as a hate group. During the rally and counter-protest itself, Antifa, knowing the clergy group was committed to non-violence, was often found surrounding (or having the backs of) clergy when neo-Nazi's got too close or seemed to threaten harm. After the protests, Rev. Sekou went on record stating unequivocally that Antifa saved the lives of many clergy that day, especially those who blocked one of the entrances attempting to refuse entry to hundreds of neo-Nazis marching in unison. Reddit.com post has now been deleted, "[Antifa saved my life.](#)" - Rev Osagyefo Sekou on what happened in Charlottesville : Anarchism ([reddit.com](#)). accessed October 17, 2021.

In the voluminous coverage during and after August 12th, Rev. Sekou answered many questions about connections between faith and protest. He would talk about why the counter-protest by clergy was critical to stopping hate and white supremacy, and discuss the power of non-violent direct action, especially considering the violence at the rally itself. He would also speak about what it means to stand up to hate at all. In one of those interviews, Sekou introduced the phenomenon of Cowardly Grace.¹⁶³ Rev. Sekou brought forward that many people talk about fighting against injustice while making specific connections between their faith and justice. However, the tactics they use fly in the face of what they actually need to do so. Specifically relating this to Charlottesville, master-activist Sekou amplified the actions of some white counter-protestors who made it their mission that day to build bridges with those there for the rally, to start and hold conversations with the armed militia, and to empathize with the white supremacists to create connections and future dialogue. Sekou argued that their intentions to engage these tactics stemmed from their understanding of what their faith compelled them to do. In fact, though, they employed a Cowardly Grace.

I understand his argument to mean that Cowardly Grace is any move, connected by a commitment to faith, that attempts the following:

- to see the good in both sides though only one side commits evil,
- to build relationships with people, even those who are adamant about their sin, before naming the sin itself, and
- to keep the peace by creating a false peace—that which covers over both explicit and implicit violence already occurring.

¹⁶³ Perhaps “named” is correct over “introduced,” however, I have not heard nor seen another use the phrase, “Cowardly Grace.”

Cowardly Grace provides a counterfeit spiritual cover with churchy or religiousy talk that allows for injustice to remain intact even as it harms people, sometimes fatally. In terms of an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology, Cowardly Grace would take on characteristics of Bonhoeffer's Cheap Grace, adding that white people hide behind it as if we are doing the work of anti-racism while actually perpetuating racism and protecting racists. For example, any anti-racism homiletic perpetrating racism while purporting to help preachers preach anti-racism sermons are funded by theologies of Cowardly Grace.

What we need for an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology is of a different sort. Similar to Costly Grace, Catalyst Grace requires repentance and accountability for sin. In this case, specifically for white people's perpetration and protection of racism for our own benefit. With anti-racist anti-racism, grace for white folks is still offered unconditionally, yet it requires our repentance, accountability, and action to receive it. Like prevenient grace, Catalyst Grace surrounds those of us who are white waiting for the time(s) if we will acknowledge with deep regret our racism, be accountable for the direct and indirect consequences of racism which harm—even kill—BIPAL people, and act in tangible ways that interrupt and dismantle the system and all expressions of racism. However, until we meet these terms, Catalyst Grace remains phenomenologically latent. Because of the way the system of racism works, and the privileges accorded to those of us who are white even as we fight against it, required is a type of divine gift which is *both* unconditional *and* conditional. God offers white folks Catalyst Grace unconditionally because God's desire is for all of her children to return to our created goodness. God requires repentance, accountability, and action as conditions for white people to access and use Catalyst Grace. Without these pre-conditions, our over-entitled selves would steal the moniker of anti-

racist without being willing to take the risks and responsibility necessary to interrupt and dismantle racism.

An Anti-Racist Anti-Racism A.C.T.

A Theology of Responsibility for White Folks

All preaching preaches theology. Thus, an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Homiletic needs this type of theology, one which articulates its context for those of us who are white and show a commitment to interrupting and dismantling racism. Seeking wisdom alongside William Cavanaugh, Søren Kierkegaard, Serene Jones, Andrew Sung Park, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Rev. Osagyefo Sekou three major requirements for an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Articulated Context Theology emerge. First, we must seek to reclaim the power from Christian theologies misused by a lazy or naïve Church. Second, we must particularize theologies that have been universalized to force everyone to submit to the experiences of those in power. Third, but not exhaustively, we must reimagine theologies so that our domestication of God's miraculous work in us and through us fails. An Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology for white people committed to interrupting and dismantling racism is a theology of responsibility.

An Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology of Responsibility for white folks first demands that we reclaim guilt and shame as theological goods. We should not allow the Church's indolent use of guilt to prod parishioners to serve on committees or to exert a selfish misuse of shame to ratify oppression into doctrine to guide us. Rather, guilt and shame can be reclaimed as gifts from God to help humans find our way back to who we have been created and called to be. A divine course-correction, guilt and shame teach us through our

souls (or consciences) the things we do that veer us further and further away from who we are. We do not consider guilt and shame through the lens of that which makes us despair in ways that paralyze white people to ignore racism or defend ourselves against charges of racism. Rather, we are opened to the reality that God can use guilt and shame to drive us to God, who gives us the will and capability to interrupt and dismantle racism—beginning but not ending with our own.

For an anti-racism theology to be anti-racist, white folks must also accept as necessary, the realities of racial positionality. We do not navigate the world the same as do BIPAL people. Our world is racialized by hierarchies, created and maintained by white supremacy. Our whiteness protects us, privileges us, and prioritizes us. The system of racism teaches and allows those of us who are white our entitlement to access resources, opportunities, and trust is unlimited. Our primary sin from this positionality is the over-entitled self. We must engage a preaching theology which names specifically the context of our over-entitled selves and what it means for us to come back to right relationship before God and with others, including those we harm by the system and our own racism.

A theology which seeks to be both anti-racist and to articulate white folks' racism, must reimagine a grace that is paradoxically *both* unconditional *and* conditional. Catalyst Grace, similar to prevenient grace, surrounds those of us who are white with an unconditional divine gift, which seeks to return us to our humanity and relationship with God. Yet, with the way racism works, white folks continue to benefit from the system of racism even while we fight against it. Catalyst Grace requires deep repentance. It holds white people accountable for the consequences of the system of racism and our own, as

well as responsible to interrupt and dismantle racism in tangible ways. A divine gift, simultaneously conditioned and unconditional, seems impossible. Yet, this is exactly the “both/and” type of grace required for white people who commit to anti-racism work; otherwise, we will steal the moniker of anti-racist with none of the work required of it.

Chapter 3: “Pedagogy of the Oppressor: An Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Pedagogy”

The very first homilician, St. Augustine of Africa, teaches a three-fold preaching interpretive: [1] teach folks something new; [2] keep their attention long enough to teach them something new; and [3] by the power of the Holy Spirit, the people will act upon the something new they just learned.¹⁶⁴ When we preach, we are preaching our theology, but also when we preach, we are preaching our pedagogy. In other words, our preaching teaches something. An anti-racist anti-racism pedagogy creates a bridge between an anti-racist anti-racism theology and an anti-racist anti-racism homiletic. Without one, racism is enacted within homiletics and sermons despite the anti-racist anti-racism present in its theology. Every sermon teaches at both explicit and implicit levels.

The content of the sermon usually comes to mind when we think about didactic or teaching sermons. What does the sermon explicitly say? However, every sermon also teaches at the implicit level. At times, contradictory body language sabotages the intended message of the sermon or the everyday messiness of relationships between preacher and listeners interrupts communication. Other implicit messaging occurs at the level of listener interpretation. We meant it one way, but listeners heard it another way. Finally, but not exhaustively, implicit matter includes our pedagogical models and methods. The goal is for explicit and implicit content to match. Often this occurs because pedagogy scaffolds the alignment. The art and science of what and how we teach content through sermons creates layers behind the veil; experienced, even if not noticed, by preachers and listeners alike. Just as theology grounds sermons with “God-talk,” and Articulated

¹⁶⁴ St. Augustine, “Book Four,” *On Christian Doctrine*, translated by D.W. Robertson, Jr. (Indianapolis: The Bobbs Merrill Company, Inc., 1958), 117-169.

Context Theologies specifically name the people, places, and practices from which we talk-God, our pedagogy shapes our sermons with particular outcomes in mind.

Pedagogies can “do” a number of things:

- Guide people toward a particular type of outcome (different pedagogies needed for reflecting on a new idea, valuing something deeply, learning a new skill, or enacting that new skill).
- Create entry points for different learning styles, diverse prior knowledge, presumed awareness of needs, or reversals in known ordering of information.
- Decide upon style/content cohesiveness with germane implementation.
- Provide links between the art and science of sermon creation and proclamation.
- Teach the sermon’s underlying theology.

In addition to the choices for pedagogy, in general, an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Pedagogy for white people must address *both* our need to interrupt and dismantle racism while we still participate in and perpetuate it. As was amplified in the summary of anti-racism preaching books written by white homiliticians, one major pedagogical fail is to steal the pedagogies meant for direct targets of racism to resist its harm as if they apply to those of us who are white. White homiliticians assume that because anti-racism work is social justice work, when our goals are social justice, we can appropriate models and methods written by and for BIPAL people. This is a lie, and it is racist. Those of us who are white have no business extending our already over-entitled selves into pedagogies of direct targets of racism as if we stand outside of our racism. As was outlined in the Anti-Racist Anti-Racism A.C.T., we must take our “both/and” racial positionality seriously and refuse the temptation to steal Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Pedagogies as if they are ours for the taking.

As with A.C.T.'s, it is not necessary to start from scratch to develop an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Pedagogy, but we must be especially careful to honor the original context from which it emerges and those for whom it is meant. By doing so, we can then make the necessary changes that apply to our context as white folks attempting to dismantle a system from which we benefit. The work of Paulo Freire is often used by seminary students and preachers to highlight the nature of social justice work and overcoming oppression. Problematically, though, many times those of us with privileges (of any kind) assume this work is written for us. It was not. Freire's most acclaimed work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*,¹⁶⁵ often falls into this category. However, when considered first for its own context, it is possible to honor its original purpose as it provides the necessary fodder for an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Pedagogy for those of us who are white. In other words, Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* can help bring about a *Pedagogy of the Oppressor* when we offer it the honor it is due.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed:

Conscientization for Direct Targets of Oppression

In Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, both teacher and students engage in learning, knowing, and the construction of knowledge that leads to liberating forms of living into the fullness of our humanness. Freire first distinguishes between the "banking" model and "problem-posing" model of education.¹⁶⁶ The "banking" model creates a holding pattern for society. It allows for and sustains the current ideologies, rewards adherence to the status quo, and perpetuates current injustices. With strict teacher/student hierarchies,

¹⁶⁵ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 30th Anniversary Edition (New York: continuum, 2007).

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 72, 79.

this model allows for the teacher to represent the authority and the student to represent the obedient. Classrooms become a mirror and extension of the larger power institution and its expressions. In Freire's circumstance: the State. It is named the "banking" model because teachers deposit information into students and expect to be able to withdraw the same information upon demand. In terms of action, the teacher acts while the students experience the illusion of action. In contrast to agentic action, the students are simply regurgitating what has been given to (forced upon) them in the most exact manner possible. Even in cases where the State does not create mandatory curriculum, the "banking" model does not allow for students to create knowledge of their own without literal or symbolic punishment.

To counter the "banking" model, Freire favors the "problem-posing" method centered on critical dialogue, questions, and student-led action. Though the following four stages to this humanizing pedagogy are overarching and overlapping, I will name each one separately in the order which follows his book for clarity:¹⁶⁷

- **Realize/Perception:** As the Rev. Dr. Gregory Ellison II is known for saying, "Once you see, you cannot not see." But seeing in an oppressive situation presents a multi-form problem. The way oppression often works is to create a sense of naturalization rather than allowing people access to the construction of systems, institutions, and reality itself. If people believe that, "things are the way they are because that's the way they are," it is difficult, if not impossible, to begin dialogue let alone create alternatives. The first entry point builds the capability to realize

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 43-70.

that one is not oppressed (nor are others in power) because nature intended it that way. When systems, political powers, and truth are thought of human constructions, it creates the possibility that human beings can also deconstruct and reconstruct them.

- **Critique/Reflection:** Once a person can see the possibility of options, she/he/they can begin to consider the value in naming what they see. When reality all around you is considered the natural or divine state of things, there is no point of naming what you see to reflect upon it. Why bother? Things never change so just keep your head down and keep it moving. However, once that shield has been lifted, it is important for people to begin noting and reflecting upon what they see. To counter the banking model, this process cannot be overtaken by a teacher. Even if the teacher is from the same community, a humanizing pedagogy recognizes the importance of each person reflecting upon their own circumstances and experiences. In Freire's model, teachers are not from the community and must be especially careful not to impose their reflections which can subsume those from within. Without other places to start, a teacher might begin to ask questions. Or an even better option, the teacher asks students to ask questions about their own reality. Teachers must be creative in asking questions to allow space for students to reflect on situations that are real, present, and, until then, have been protected from scrutiny.
- **Imagine/Consciousness:** Once people can "see," and begin to question their circumstances to allow for reflection on "what is," spaces open up for imagining new possibilities. Freire uses the term conscientization to describe the process where one recognizes, names, and lives into their ability to make life-giving

changes in their lives, communities, and the world. Persons come to know themselves as active participants in choice, change, and creation. Part of this process occurs in the dialogue between students and teachers. Dialogue empowers students in at least two ways. First, students often realize that others have seen and questioned the same things they have. When this happens, students feel their ideas and abilities (maybe even personhood) emboldened because they are not alone in recognizing or experiencing the oppression/injustices. Second, students learn from each other when realizing that others see and question different things than they have. One's capability to "see" in new ways allows for students to be considered teachers in their own right. Now all students are teachers and teachers are students.¹⁶⁸ Conscientization creates a community of teacher/students (students who teach) and student/teachers (teachers who learn). The students' power to imagine anew includes differently imagining themselves and their communities. Momentum builds internally (conscientization) and externally (dialogue) for the students to imagine new options into realities.

- **Act/Commitment-Praxis:** All the seeing, and the questioning, and the imagining ideally culminate with action in the "problem-posing" model. Liberation is always the goal and liberation happens tangibly, on the ground, with a disruption in oppression. True to its philosophical and pedagogical grounding, this model challenges students to take responsibility for action. Both in content and in method, students must be free to initiate, implement, and follow through with life-

¹⁶⁸ As Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza states in *Democratizing Biblical Studies*, students and teachers are not the same but they each bring different and necessary knowledges and capabilities to the table. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Democratizing Biblical Studies: Toward an Emancipatory Educational Space* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 161.

giving changes in their lives and communities. If teachers 'take control of this step, the work that has gone before serves as a false-bottom. It reinforces models which perpetrate teacher authority as being really real or that which matters. Teachers are the ones who hold power and not the students. Deeply embedded, but not mentioned specifically in Freire's explication of the four-fold model, is a joint-responsibility of commitment to action. Especially for student/teachers who will eventually leave the community to "go back home," it is imperative upon them to resist the temptation to take over at the action stage. For actions to create real change, the students (community) must be responsible for their own commitment to liberation. No one can liberate anyone for anyone else. While structures of oppression might be torn down by others, liberation from within holds the creative power and courage to prevent future oppression from taking hold. Moreover, when community-driven acts do not bring about sustained liberation, the commitment of the community is emboldened by a new sense of concomitant independence and solidarity among each other. This is what creates the strength and bravery to begin the four-fold process again if necessary.

Overall, Freire's problem-posing model creates an environment potent for the process of conscientization of the oppressed: see, ask, imagine, act. This is a direct and intentional counter to the banking model which demands strict obedience to content created and delivered by the power structure and its minions. As a pedagogy of the oppressor, this model continues to work powerfully, just with different reasoning and results. As a pedagogy of the oppressor within an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Homiletic, it creates a number of compounding problems. To serve as fodder for white folks' conscientization, a

number of changes must be included to reflect our “both/and” racial positionality and the phenomenological reality of those who fight against that which continues to benefit us.

Pedagogy of the Oppressor:

Conscientization for Perpetrators of Oppression

To create a pedagogy of the oppressor within an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Homiletic, we must center the “both/and” racial positionality of white folks within the system of racism. Those of us who are white, who fight to interrupt and dismantle racism, simultaneously dismantle and benefit from the same system. Audre Lorde’s incisive instruction that the master’s house cannot be dismantled with the master’s tools¹⁶⁹ creates the very real possibility that the one who lives in the master’s house will not see or question the master’s tools, is not capable of imagining the benefit of new tools or how new tools are not “too dangerous,” and will refuse to use the new tools because they were created by those without the sanction of the master’s house.

As has already been mentioned, oppression reasserts itself as oppressors appropriate resistance strategies meant for those directly oppressed within that system. Thus, it is imperative that those of us who are white take precise precautions to honor the original content and audience of social justice pedagogies not created for us. By considering each aspect of Freire’s pedagogy of the oppressed for its applicable wisdom for those of us who

¹⁶⁹ Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 112.

are white, as well as the dangers when appropriated, by the power of the Resurrection God,¹⁷⁰ a new thing might emerge: A Pedagogy of the Oppressor.

Realize/Perception:

For conscientization to occur for the oppressed, one must be able to see what one cannot yet see. This relates exactly for the oppressor as well. The way oppression often works is to create a sense of naturalization rather than allowing people access to the construction of the system, institutions, and reality itself. The key for both oppressed and the oppressor is to learn the system itself is constructed and thus, can be deconstructed.

For the oppressed, this new seeing is positive. One realizes their lot is not fated nor divine, that one is not created nor meant to suffer. A deconstructed human system provides the possibility of a system reconstructed and this is good news to the one oppressed. The one oppressed realizes they are not created to serve the present system as the system is revealed more and more as created. Oppression, and one's designation as a direct target of it, is no longer omnipotent.

¹⁷⁰ The Resurrection God is different than the Resuscitation God. The latter imagines the Christian God falsely as One who only creates by what has been created before. The Resurrection God of the Bible, is One who consistently does that which no one can imagine beforehand based on what has gone before despite any form or counter-form that might be present. On the first Good Friday and Holy Saturday, people experienced nothing good nor holy. God was dead and with that all their hopes and dreams and possibilities for what they imagined might come next. No one could imagine an Easter Sunday with a rolled-back stone and an empty tomb. In the case of a Pedagogy of the Oppressor, though it starts with a Pedagogy of the Oppressed, the realities of racism alone create the very real possibility that racists will never release fully our hold on unearned racialized privilege nor the explicit and implicit violence it takes to maintain it. For there to even be a Pedagogy of the Oppressor that will dislodge racism, at all, especially at the hands of those whose power it protects, would be a miracle at the level of a God who creates Resurrection out of nothing that has gone before.

For the oppressor, though, this new seeing is immediately negative. In other words, once the system is exposed for its human construction, the oppressor must come to terms with what it means to have benefited from a system that oppresses others and is neither natural nor inevitable. In other words, those of us who are white must come to realize that our life as we know it, as it relates to race, is not part of the way things are meant to be. Any system re-constructed in light of the ways racism has oppressed BIPAL people, will mean at the very least, change to the unearned benefits those of us who are white have reaped from the oppression. Oppression, and one's power within it, are no longer assumed or invisible.

Critique/Reflection:

Seeing the created nature of the system provides an opportunity to question what has yet been unchallenged. This is a direct counter to the banking system which relies on reinforcing and protecting the status quo of the current system. Rather than teachers forcing students to regurgitate information of the system or face punishment, people are asked to reflect on their own circumstances and question the current state of things in that light. Interrogating the created system highlights the specifics of the oppression such that the how's and why's of the system's functioning is brought to the fore.

We must keep in mind, however, the system of oppression often functions in and by hiding; not allowing the specifics or day-to-day operations of the system to be exposed. That being said, it takes a bit of detective work to uncover what has been created to be hidden. For both the oppressed and the oppressor, this means finding questions that expose what has always been experienced as normal. In other words, like fish, we must

figure out ways to question the water in which we live. For both the oppressed and oppressor, this can be a difficult task but for different reasons.

For those oppressed, the desire for freedom and agency creates internal and external motivators to discover how the system has been used to their detriment. The process of noting and naming what they see and engaging critical reflection is based on their own circumstances which inherently highlight the ways that oppression is functioning within the system. Literally, those oppressed, when naming their experiences, are exposing how the system operates to maintain their oppression. When teachers refrain from overstepping this process and ask carefully and honorably constructed questions, the authentic responses from those oppressed by the system will name the oppressive structures and expressions by default.

For the oppressor, our questions will magnify how the system, functioning to the detriment of others, has been privileging, protecting, and prioritizing us. The process of noting and naming what we see and engaging critical reflection based on our circumstances will reinforce the system in its current state. This is because systems of oppression, while opaque for everyone in the sense the inner workings are hidden from view, are created specifically according to the logic models of the oppressor. In other words, the system of oppression is created out of and in order to make sense to the oppressor. We see this often when the oppressor makes excuses for instances where the oppression is blatant. In addition, within a system that both makes sense to us and affords us privileges, the oppressor will have areas of obliviousness which compound the opacity of how the system operates to maintain itself. Teachers utilizing this pedagogical structure

with the oppressor must find ways to highlight circumstances which create interventions into the oppressors' logic and privileges.¹⁷¹

Imagine/Consciousness:

New possibilities form when people dream about a new future, unhindered by the realities of the present system. Freire uses the term conscientization to describe the process of engaging one's (or a community's) agency to develop a new system. In other words, people come to see themselves as active agents in the process of change. One way this happens is the sharing of experiences among students who learn both they are not the only ones experiencing certain things and their experiences are not the only ones. As everyone learns from each other, each person becomes a student/teacher and a teacher/student. Momentum builds during conscientization as the prospect of a new way overshadows the current reality.

For those oppressed, this is a critical stage of the process. Here, those who have been told what to believe and the limits of reality by an oppressive system begin to create that which honors their humanity, dignity, and value. This is a tipping point¹⁷² of sorts in that this is the first expression of something new. The reality of a constructed and deconstructed

¹⁷¹ For example, one day, while teaching at Lee Arrendale Prison, I asked a prison guard why an inmate was being singled out for a body search. The guard responded that the inmate had been known to steal food from the kitchen. I asked, 'oh, do you think she was hungry?' Specifically and purposefully I asked this on a Friday (one of three days inmates don't get served lunch in Georgia prisons). I also timed it so that it was during lunch while I smelled the guard's food heating up in the office and the teachers were getting ready for our lunch break. This created a situation where the guard had to answer the question in the midst of contextual cues highlighting that the inmates don't get to eat three meals a day while others do. In this case, the questions are asked of the powerful and not those oppressed and the example serves to highlight question asking strategy for critical reflection of realities without prior critique.

¹⁷² Gladwell, *The Tipping Point*, 2000.

oppressive system paves the way for imagining what could be next. And all the while, the primary driver remains those who have been neglected, marginalized, and harmed by the current system. Those whose personhood, let alone ideas, have been undervalued are now the center of innovation.¹⁷³ The method and the result: hope.

For the oppressor, conscientization represents a tipping point of a different sort. Here, those who have been served by the system of oppression must imagine the new without the inequitable benefits to which we have become accustomed. While the first two stages are difficult for us because of the way the system is set up, this stage signifies the moment when we must take responsibility for our unjust comfort and priority within the system of oppression. We must face head on the ways the current system – and thus our current benefits – have been possible only at the expense of those directly oppressed by it. The oppressors' protective measures begin to kick in at this stage as more and more risk to what we still believe we deserve is involved. There are three overarching possible outcomes to this stage for the oppressor: [1] protective measures obliterate or obscure our dreaming all together; [2] we focus on our *intention* to create something new even as our attempts at imagining a just system replicate the oppressive one; or [3] we imagine the new despite what we lose because we take/accept responsibility for stealing more than our share in the first place.

Act/Commitment-Praxis:

¹⁷³ Michael Hurley, "Who's On Whose Margins?" *Researching the Margins: Strategies for Ethical and Rigorous Research with Marginalised Communities*, edited by Marian Pitts and Anthony Smith (New York: Palgrave, 2007), 160-189.

Liberation occurs neither by accident nor without tangible action. Intentions are never enough. This is why the strict banking model cannot work; because no one person can make another person do anything. I am not saying someone cannot FORCE someone to do something else – but that would be against someone’s will, or because the punishment for refusal would be worse than resisting it. What I am highlighting is the inability of one person/group creating the motivation within someone else to do anything. We can persuade each other or force each other but at the end of the day, each of us will decide for what reason we will choose to do something or not. Education theorists call this “Control Theory.”¹⁷⁴

Within the problem-posing model, this internal motivation means different things for the oppressed and the oppressor. The one who is oppressed must always be and feel free to take responsibility for action. Because the system of oppression works to distance a person from their agency, the problem-solving model falls apart if, after conscientization, the participants do not take a central role in the enacting of the new system. When teachers, especially those outside of the community, impose their power upon participants at the stage of action either through initiating planning, or demanding a certain protocol of implementation, or taking on a leadership role, the problem-solving model regresses to the banking model. Worthy of being said again, while some structures of oppression might be torn down by others, liberation from within holds the creative power and courage to prevent future oppression from taking hold. This is especially true

¹⁷⁴ John A. Cassell and Thomas Nelson, “Control, Choice, and the Fulfillment of Fundamental Human Needs: William Glasser’s Humanistic Vision of Individual, Classroom, and Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Support,” *The Handbook of Educational Theories*, edited by Beverly J. Irby, Genevieve Brown, Rafael Lara-Alecio, and Shirley Jackson (Charlotte: Information Age Publishing, Inc., 2013), 700-701.

if sustained liberation weakens. Liberation dreamed, initiated, and led by those who are oppressed creates an independence, a bravery, and a strength necessary for ongoing resistance, even – perhaps especially – in the face of any setback.

The oppressor must also have an internalized commitment to responsibility and action but for different reasons and in different expressions. After conscientization, the oppressor must fulfill action in order to participate in the overthrow of the oppressive system. Notice, I did not say participate in the liberation of the oppressed (and for God's sake, I did not say liberate the oppressed). While the oppressor might be allowed to participate in the liberation *efforts* of those who are oppressed, this happens through following the leadership of agentic persons for whom the oppressive system has been death-dealing. The oppressor is required, without exception, to participate fully in the overthrow of the oppressive system itself. Our roles within the liberation movement, however, are by invitation and require honorable participation.

The oppressor, in our “both/and” role of beneficiary and social justice warrior, has the unique positionality to amplify our unearned but tangible power within the system to tear it down. When we submit to the wisdom, authority, and strategies of those who are oppressed, we can navigate meaningfully Saint Audre Lorde's admonishment that we cannot destroy the master's house with the master's tools. In fact, obeying the authority of people who are oppressed is perhaps the ONLY way the oppressor can do this at all. The parameters laid out here, though, are an exact but not the only reason why many oppressors do not follow through with action beyond the conscientization stage: it counters everything we have learned about who we are and that to which we believe we

are entitled. Here, it is imperative for the oppressor to learn, internalize, and actualize that our intentions will never be good enough to tear down the oppressive structures and expressions of oppression that benefit us at the expense and demise of those oppressed. Only tangible, significant, powerful action (according to those oppressed) that interrupts and dismantles the oppression at every turn means anything at all.

An Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Pedagogy for the Oppressor: Learning Objectives & Learning Engagements

Summary of the four areas for the oppressor

Consideration of Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, through its authentic contextual lens of direct targets of oppression, allowed us to extrapolate a pedagogy of the oppressor. Despite their overlapping nature, the four discrete areas of Freire's model were used to brainstorm how each relates to and informs the oppressor as to our work within a problem-posing method. Each area considers as critical the "both/and" positionality of the oppressor as one who benefits from the oppressive system even as we attempt to interrupt and dismantle it.

At the **realize/perception** stage, the oppressor will experience something negative; a taking away. As we are able to see the system as created and not normal or natural, we simultaneously come to realize we have benefited from a system specifically created at the expense of others. We must overcome the urge to explain away our unearned privileges as that to which we are entitled. As the system of oppression, and our power within it, becomes less assumed as logical and more transparent, the oppressor increasingly must come to terms with what it will mean, specifically, when it is interrupted and dismantled.

The **critique/reflection** stage requires the oppressor to question how the system used to detriment others has been privileging, protecting, and prioritizing us. We must be on the lookout for how our positionality as the oppressor within this system will align our experiences with the status quo and hide the realities and leverage of the oppression. We must responsibly include the experiences and perspectives of the oppressed so that our own obliviousness is revealed. Skilled teachers in the problem-posing method will craft questions for us to examine critically circumstances which create interventions into the system's (and oppressor's/our) logic and unearned privileges.

When oppressors enter the **imagine/consciousness** stage, we find ourselves for the first time required to confront how we, ourselves, must take responsibility for our unjust comfort and priority within the system of oppression. We must defy our instincts to protect or defend our over-entitlement which steals unearned benefits at the expense of those directly oppressed by it. Even to dream of a new way, requires the oppressor to internalize and to implement the level of risk only possible when we take responsibility for our role in oppression. Depending on whether we choose to protect ourselves, defend ourselves, or take responsibility, we will obliterate/obscure the possibility of dreaming anew, replicate the oppressive system with "good" intentions, or imagine the new despite what we must pay back and repair.

Finally, the oppressor must have internalized our responsibility to interrupt and dismantle the same system which benefits us in the **action/commitment-praxis** stage. We must participate in the overthrowing of the system by honoring the agency and

obeying the leadership of people who are the direct targets of oppression. We utilize our unique dual role as *both* insider *and* disruptor of the system to dismantle the system without replicating it. We fight our deep urges to take over for those oppressed and never engage the lie that we are liberating them. We intentionally override what we have been taught: that we know what is best. We must engage our intentions in tangible action (as deemed necessary by those oppressed) that interrupts and dismantles the oppression from which we continue to benefit.

An Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Pedagogy for White Folks

An Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Pedagogy, at its heart, recognizes racial positionality as an undisputable requirement for a pedagogy of the oppressor. By considering the problem-posing model as a counter to the banking model, the pedagogy that walks alongside those oppressed as they live into conscientization, and the unique “both/and” positionality for the oppressor within a system we benefit from even as we work to dismantle it, we are poised to nuance it for a specific set of oppressions: the system of racism and its progenitor, the ideology of white supremacy. The following list of learning objectives provides necessary boundaries and directives extrapolated from this chapter and the resources it has generated while I have worked at GCORR (the General Commission on Religion and Race). Following this starter list, two (2) learning engagements which highlight anti-racist anti-racism content and method will be displayed along with facilitator notes/directions on how to use them and why they fit within this pedagogy.

- **Internalizing our “Both/And” Racial Positionality is Non-Negotiable:**
The system of racism creates different perspectives and experiences for BIPAL people and those of us who are not. Those of us who are white benefit at the

expense of BIPAL people. Without intervention, the system itself makes sense to white folks because it is based on our realities, making it easy for us to make excuses for why something is not racism. Our capability to name ourselves as white, or racialized as white, is not enough. We must internalize how our whiteness affects how we think, how we act, and what we believe to be true and right. Since any oppression works hard to comfort and cushion the oppressors from its day-to-day workings, those of us who are white must always take into consideration how we remain oblivious to certain aspects of (our) racism despite our commitment to fighting against it. Our work always includes finding and implementing anti-racist ways to have our racism revealed, interrogated, and transfigured.

- **Considering Negative Feelings as Necessary to Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Work for Those of Us Who are White:** Some of these negative feelings are part of God's plan to bring those of us who are white back to our humanness. An Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology helps us recognize guilt and shame as theological goods which confront our souls when we act in ways that drive us away from our created and called goodness. Even despair can be used by God as that which brings us before the divine for a prevenient-like grace offered unconditionally but conditionally actualized. Some of these negative feelings are part of what it means for an over-entitled self to learn/be told we are logically and morally wrong. Feelings like anger, frustration, depression, sadness, rage, and anxiety are normal parts of anti-racist anti-racism work for white folks but are part of what we need to work through in honorable ways so that we can continue to do this work longer and at all.

3. **Building Resilience to our White Fragility Must be Done Honorably**

Otherwise It's Racist: Dr Robin DiAngelo, a white sociologist is credited for the first published definition of a phenomenon about which BIPAL people have long known and talked.

WHITE FRAGILITY is the symbolic, but very real line, over which when crossed, white people will exhibit a number of expected behaviors, including but not limited to anger, fear, frustration, shutting down, lashing out, walking out, confusion and crying which display our inability to handle our increasing awareness of our participation in, perpetuation of, and protection of racism and /or being called out on our racism, especially in public. (eml paraphrase of DiAngelo's definition)

Those of us who are white must embrace this reality not to normalize it, but rather to acknowledge this is part of the internalization process for us to do anti-racism work. After acknowledgement, we take responsibility for building our resilience to our white fragility so that we can do more and more anti-racism work before our fragility arises again. When we attempt to build our resilience by expecting BIPAL people to take care of and educate us, we perpetrate racism. When we utilize the ubiquitous guidance already available publicly or by purchase, and expose our frailty among other white people, we build our resilience *so that* we can continue anti-racism work in much more responsible ways.

- **Question How Racism Privileges, Protects, and Prioritizes Us to the Detriment of BIPAL people.** First, we must apply these questions to every aspect of our lives, including but not limited to our anti-racism work. We must never assume that we are capable of stepping outside of our racial positionality within a system that benefits us because of race. Especially as we commit to and engage in work to fight against racism, we must be continually aware of our

seemingly insatiable urge to define and defend ourselves as “the good ones” or different from “those white people.” Those of us who are white must be accountable for how racism serves us to the detriment of BIPAL people. Second, we must ask questions that create interventions into our (the oppressors’) system of logic and privileges. What are the specific policies and practices that perpetuate racism within institutions and how have I benefited/ do I benefit from those? What instances of racialized terror have I explained away or excused as other than racism, especially when BIPAL people testify otherwise? What dialogue partners (in-person, books, social media, music...) do I have that will cause interruptions to my racism and to how I benefit from the system of racism and its expressions? Third, when our white fragility comes to the fore, we must interrogate which aspect of racism it is connected to and why we are so attached to it. White fragility is expressed at the exact moments when racism to which we are still attached, from which we deeply benefit, or which we still believe is exposed. Not only must those of us who are white address our white fragility, but we must also interrogate our attachment to the racism our white fragility is attempting to protect.

- **Compensate BIPAL people for the Intellectual and Emotional Work They Do from Which We Learn.** This applies to both public and paid-for information/education.
 - **Wisdom made public with no monetary cost to us.** There are many sources, publicly available, written by BIPAL people which will help white folks learn about our racism, expose our obliviousness, and engage in anti-racism work within our racial positionality. These should be considered as a starting point but not taken for granted. Those of us who are white must

realize that we will never know the cost of the intellectual and emotional burden exacted upon BIPAL people who decide to provide this wisdom for free to the public. Moreover, we should always be in a deep state of awe-filled indebtedness for access to this information because we absolutely do not deserve it. It should not have to be said, but always must in anti-racism work with those of us who are white, we should never, ever think for one second that we are entitled to this information from BIPAL people. This is especially so when it comes at no cost to us. Any hint of entitlement or inkling that we deserve this, or that BIPAL people should offer this wisdom publicly to white people is racist. White folks should find ways to support the BIPAL authors and activists in ways that are meaningful to them when we are utilizing their public work to learn and live into anti-racism work. This might take many forms including but not limited to payments via app, supporting other causes/organizations to which they point us, and/or purchasing other offerings of wisdom they sell (books, sign up for workshops, podcast membership).

- o **Pay BIPAL Consultants.** One way that white people perpetuate racism is by using BIPAL consultants. We do this in multiple ways including but not limited to: [1] saying we want to build relationships with BIPAL people (or the Black Church down the street) but we really want BIPAL people to make us more aware of racism; [2] exploiting the superficial relationships we have with BIPAL people (church down the street, the Latina woman we work with – but never have lunch with, someone we follow on social media) in order to ask them (demand of them) their stories of racialized trauma so we can

learn about what we do not yet see; [3] inviting BIPAL Speakers/Authors/Pastors/Leaders to our organizations and do not pay them or pay them a disrespectfully low amount (this often happens in churches where we couch it in language of serving God, the Lord, or building the Kin(g)dom). Any time we are asking BIPAL people to teach us about racism, our obliviousness, or how to do anti-racism work – especially when that might include their sharing their testimonies of racial trauma with us – we are hiring a consultant and should pay them as such. They are experts and we want to learn. Pretending we are building relationships with people from whom we only expect to receive something is blasphemous. Pretending we are building relationships with BIPAL people but really want anti-racism training for white people, is racist.

- o **EXTRA HINT about the difference between relationships with BIPAL people and using BIPAL consultants:** If those of us who are white, have some sort of relationship/interactions with a BIPAL person, but they have never initiated conversations about race and racism with us, we have not built up enough trust in the relationship/interaction to be having race/racism conversations with them – let alone asking them questions. In addition, if they have initiated conversations with us, but they are at a basic/superficial level, that is the level of trust we have built up thus far.
- **Recognize the Responsibility to Build Trust across Lines of Racial Difference is always that of Those of Us Who are White.** White people are the culprits of racism. We are the ones who have perpetrated it, been protected by it, and been prioritized by it. We are the ones for whom benefits are stolen from

BIPAL people. We are the ones whom unearned access, opportunities, resources, provisions, and benefit of the doubt are given. Moreover, those of us who are white betray the trust of BIPAL people every time we accept, ignore, deny, protect, or explain away these things. In addition, white folks who say we are fighting against racism, betray the trust of BIPAL people every time and in every way we do not fight against racism. Some BIPAL people have even said this is worse than if we were just outwardly and explicitly blatant with our racism.¹⁷⁵ Imagine for a moment that you are fighting an injustice that directly targets you. Someone you know who benefits from that injustice says to you (explicitly or implicitly – in person or on social media) that they are in the fight with/alongside you and want you to know they are your ally/accomplice/friend. For a second, you might let your guard down and let yourself believe that a break within the system of injustice is possible; even that the person you know might actually be different. Then, you go into a meeting where that injustice is perpetrated and the person sits there silent, explains away what just happened, or looks at you while waiting for you to do something. The next day, you both attend an anti-(injustice) workshop at the Church. Do you trust that person, just because they are in attendance? Regardless of how much anti-racism work white folks do, what we do for a living, who we are in relationship with, how many workshops we go to, or what we post on social media, those of us who are white are always the ones who must build trust. Always.

¹⁷⁵ Michael Harriot, “It’s Official: White Allies are the Worst Wypipo in the World,” *The Root* (August 3, 2017), accessed October 17, 2021, [It’s Official: White Allies Are the Worst Wypipo in the World \(theroot.com\)](https://www.theroot.com/white-allies-are-the-worst-wypipo-in-the-world). More famously the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. names this phenomenon in his “Letter from Birmingham City Jail.” Martin Luther King, Jr. “Letter from Birmingham City Jail (1963),” *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* edited by James M. Washington (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991), 295.

We still benefit from the system of racism and still perpetrate racism even as we fight against it. We are the ones responsible to build trust with BIPAL people, not the other way around.

- **Those of Us Who are White Must Shift our Thinking and Language from Sharing What We Have to Repaying What We Stole (plus interest).** Two people are standing in front of a judge. One person stole \$2000 from the other. The judge gets ready to give the verdict. The judge orders the person who stole the money to give \$1000 back to the person from whom they stole it. In what world does that sound right? Yet, those of us who are white, often insist that we share our unearned racial benefits and privileges with BIPAL people. We do this in different ways including but not limited to: [a] saying we will step back from OUR position to make room for a BIPAL person; [b] literally saying we need to share resources, opportunities, etc. with BIPAL people; or [c] avoiding the language of stealing when we talk about our unearned racial benefits and privileges (or getting defensive when it is suggested, or explaining why we did not actually steal anything...). The only way those of us who are white have what we do not deserve and did not earn is because we stole it from those who should have had it. **BONUS TIP:** If you are white, and after having read this last sentence started thinking about how BIPAL people should not automatically have whatever your privilege or benefit or access or opportunity was/is, you are perpetuating racism, right now. This also applies to any of us who were thinking about how we did earn what we have/had, how we worked hard for everything we have and/or struggled/suffered in our lives, or the multitude of reasons why repairing/repaying this is too big a problem or not my responsibility. You're welcome.

- **Refuse to Rely on our Intentions and Only Focus on Our Impact/Outcomes.** It is true that sometimes it is our intentions that bring us to intended outcomes but many times impact reveals the opposite. Those of us who are white, especially when we are operating out of our oblivion, fear, or willful ignorance, often replicate and perpetrate racism even as we attempt to fight against it. If the words, ‘I didn’t mean that to be racist OR I didn’t know that it was racist’ have ever been uttered from our mouths we have attempted to protect ourselves from our responsibility for racism by highlighting our intentions. The actions that emerge from what we “mean” and “expect” cannot be trusted without deep interrogation and accountability because what we “mean” and “expect” has been trained, nurtured, and protected by racism. When we focus only on whether our outcomes are anti-racist, as defined by BIPAL people and trusted anti-racist anti-racism sources, we cultivate practices that can influence, amplify, or purify our intentions. This is critical because one of the ways those of us who are white perpetrate and protect racism is by thinking we have good intentions (the intention to fight racism) when really our primary intention is protecting ourselves from being called out on our racism, especially in public (the “I’m not racist” defense).
- **White People Participate in the Overthrow of the Oppressive System in Racially Positioned Ways.** Those of us who are white must act in order for anti-racism to occur. We cannot sit around feeling bad about it or intend to fight it; we must act in order to interrupt and dismantle racism. It is imperative for white folks to learn, internalize, and actualize that our intentions will never be good enough to tear down the oppressive structures and expressions of oppression that continue to benefit us at the expense and demise of BIPAL people. Only tangible, significant,

powerful action that interrupts and dismantles racism at every turn means anything at all. To start, we must use our positional power within the system to fight it. In our “both/and” role of beneficiary and social justice warrior, those of us who are white have the unique positionality to amplify our unearned but tangible power within the system to tear it down. While we are working to tear down the system as an insider, we learn about what it means for us to do so in ways that direct targets of racism have deemed worthy, tangible, and meaningful. We are required to participate fully in the tearing down of the oppressive system while following the strategies and the timelines of BIPAL people. While those of us who are white might be allowed to participate in the liberative efforts of BIPAL people, this happens through obeying the leadership of agentic persons for whom the oppressive system has been death-dealing. White folks have roles within the liberation movement but by invitation and requiring our honorable participation.

- **As the Oppressor, Those of us who are White Must Engage a “Both/And” Pedagogy: A Hybrid Problem-Posing & Banking Model.**

Just as an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Articulated Context Theology demands a form of grace which is *both* unconditional *and* conditional, an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Pedagogy of the Oppressor paradoxically demands white people submit to the banking model as we engage in a problem-posing one. From the problem-posing model, we participate in seeing, questioning, imagining, and acting. Even though we do so from the positionality of the oppressor, we still have work to do from each of those areas. Just as conscientization for those who are oppressed creates an internalization of, and living out of, a new reality based in action, so also does it for those of us who are white as we work to create an anti-racist system. Our

conscientization process is different in that we must overcome our seemingly insatiable urge to defend ourselves from charges of racism, to protect ourselves with racism, and to deny our responsibility for anti-racism work that we deem too hard, risky, or painful. While the problem-posing model is crucial for an integrated personal *and* skill-set internalization, the banking model which mandates exact information from an expert is necessary for those of us who are white doing anti-racism work. Just as the banking model can reproduce and demand regurgitation of the status quo of an oppressive system, it can also reproduce and demand adherence to that which will create and sustain a just system. From this perspective, those of us who are white learn from experts what we can never know on our own without intervention. Our obliviousness which covers over how we benefit from racism, plus our willingness to turn away from the realities of our benefiting at the expense of BIPAL people, make it such that we need to obey instruction which does not come from ourselves. Because the system of racism was created using logic models of whiteness, white folks cannot trust our own radar systems of what makes sense and what does not. Thus, we need the level of obedience demanded by the banking model for some of the information and skill sets we cannot be trusted to learn/come to or believe in on our own through the problem-posing model. From the banking model, we learn about and engage in anti-racism work for white people from experts: BIPAL people and anti-racism sources co-signed by them. When we submit to the wisdom, authority, and strategies of those directly targeted by the system, we can navigate meaningfully Saint Audre Lorde's admonishment that we cannot destroy the master's house with

the master's tools. In fact, obeying the authority of BIPAL people is perhaps the ONLY way those of us who are white can do this at all.

Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Learning Engagements

Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Pedagogies must be anti-oppression. In both content and presentation, teaching must interrupt and dismantle oppression, specifically racism. However, what often happens is that even anti-racism workshops are filled with exercises or templates (read here, learning covenants for churches) that reinforce the comfort and privileges of those already benefiting from the system of oppression. What follows are two learning engagements which highlight areas necessary to anti-racism work and add aspects of the pedagogy of the oppressor which makes them anti-racist. First, a “safe-space” covenant will be transformed into an anti-oppression covenant to be used as an agreement among folks trying to do anti-racism work together. Second, a learning engagement on white fragility will amplify the necessity of white people building our resilience to white fragility in order to do any anti-racism work. In addition, the same learning engagement will highlight racial positionality specifically such that while white folks work on building our resilience to white fragility, BIPAL people are invited to build their resistance to it.

ANTI-OPPRESSION COVENANTS

BIG IDEA: In the form that many of us have seen “safe space” or even “brave space” covenants, following them often recreates inequitable power dynamics and perpetrates the oppression for which the workshop/meeting purports to dismantle.

OVERARCHING SCHEMA: Recreate a list of what often shows up in “safe space” covenants with a corresponding list of anti-oppression covenant items. Designate a person or group of people to attend to each pair: group one works with item one from each list, group two with item two, and so on. Have each group attend first to the item on the “safe space” covenant to discern and report back what their item is “meant to do.” This gets at the intention of the covenant item. Facilitator will walk through each item, scaffolding the person/group to help them along the way, and when necessary, narrow down what each item is intended to do.

After all items from the first list have been discussed, move on to the second list. Remind each person/group which item they have based on the first round. Have each group attend to their number item on the second list and ask them to discern and report back what their item is meant to correct. In other words, if the first one did what it was meant to do, there would be no need for the second item. The Facilitator will walk through each item as they did with the first list. However, for this round, the facilitator will help each person/group see either a correction to the outcome or a correction to the assumption made by the item from the first list. Move through each item on the second list.

Once complete, if time allows, the group or small groups can attend to each item on the second list to create specific action items or covenant agreements that fit their context and, specifically anti-racism work. Since the anti-oppression covenants can work for any anti-oppression workshop or learning, they can be used for more than anti-racism. Facilitators can also use this reality to create focus during workshops when those of us who are white start adding sexism, and other oppressions to the conversation because we want to distract from our own complicity within and perpetration of racism. Facilitators can amplify how this covenant template can work for all oppressions and intersections of oppressions. However, for groups working on anti-racism, especially white dominant groups, it is important to focus on anti-racism so the momentum of racism does not overtake other anti-oppression efforts.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ During my work at GCORR, I worked with a church comprised of four (4) different Christian Protestant denominations across lines of theological diversity. Many would consider it impossible for this group to co-exist for that reason alone, yet, they had been in existence for over forty (40) years. While they were able to sustain and nurture community despite theological diversity that might have split another community, they did not resist the momentum of white supremacy and racism. Their leadership team (clergy and laity) had transformed from racially diverse to white dominant in just four (4) decades. By concentrating on theological diversity and anti-oppression in other areas, while maintaining “didn’t see color,” their anti-oppression and diversity efforts were no match for the entrenchment of racism within their larger and immediate context.

SAFE SPACE COVENANTS	ANTI-OPPRESSION COVENANTS
Accept Folks Where They Are	See Folks Where They Are (Assume Humanity/Build Trust)
Assume Everyone Has Good Intentions	Focus on Intent Should be Accepted as Gift Not Expected
Use “I” Statements	Own Responsibility for Words & Impact
Create Space for Each Person to Speak	Hearing and Honoring Positional Wisdom
Be Challenged to be Uncomfortable	Do Our Own Work & Take On Intentional Challenge
ISM Is Everyone’s Responsibility	Recognize ISM as Protected Group’s Responsibility
Be Polite and Respect One Another	Recognize and Avoid using “Good Sounding” Words That Do Harm
Be Willing to Experience Discomfort	Build Resilience to white Fragility; Build Resistance to white Fragility
Learn from Directly Targeted Groups Listen, Listen, Listen	Refuse to Demand Forced Sharing or Engage in Protective Silence
No-one’s Perfect at This: Be Ready with An Attitude for Change	AAA: Attention to Gratitude, Direct & Complete Apology, Attitude for Change

INTERRUPTING AND DISMANTLING WHITE FRAGILITY

BIG IDEA: White fragility is a “tipping point” expression of racism, often holding enough power to stall, interrupt, disrupt, and hijack the work of anti-racism, even in a workshop on anti-racism. Too often, unless white fragility is addressed, interrupted, and deemed unacceptable, racism persists no matter what other anti-racism strategies are employed.

*** This is a learning engagement I created and facilitate for GCORR.

*** Nuance for when this engagement is facilitated alongside BIPAL people when the workshop includes people across lines of racial difference. In those cases, BIPAL people form their own cohort/s based on what is authentic to them. White folks remain in a cohort with me. Either a BIPAL co-facilitator or someone from the BIPAL Cohort facilitates their cohort. If there is a space outside (even in the hall) – the white people go to that space – while the BIPAL people cohort/s have the premium space/s from which to choose. The BIPAL Cohort chooses how they want to address white fragility – some ways BIPAL folks have done this in the past include: [1] build (strategies of) resistance to white fragility; [2] acts of self/community care in the midst of white fragility or build immunity to white fragility; [3] intentional reflections on unhelpful responses to white fragility they find themselves enacting in the moment when it occurs.

When we all come back together, the white folks show our commitment to being accountable to BIPAL people by reporting back our strategies for building resilience to white fragility and which two actions to which we are first making a public commitment – thus inviting non-retaliatory accountability should a BIPAL person (or a white person)

name when we fail to do so. BIPAL people decide whether or not they want to share with the larger group but are under no obligation to do so. The reasons for this are explained by the Facilitator using racial positionality. BIPAL people also decide whether their cohort/s will share some items but not others.

ADDRESSING WHITE FRAGILITY

The BIG IDEA: In order for white people to do anti-racism work, we have to do anti-racism work on/with ourselves, too.

White people, even when we are actively working to fight against racism, perpetrate racism all the time. This happens for many reasons, but one of the most prominent is that we fail to do anti-racism work on/for ourselves. Because we are white, we benefit from the system of racism. We have grown up in this system, been taught this system, and are protected by this system. Without specific and intentional intervention, we continue to perpetrate this system. The system was created to “make sense” to us (this is why there are times when we explain away race/racism from examples of racism).

MAIN POINT: All white people must do the work of anti-racism personally if we are ever to do the work of anti-racism at all.

One aspect of doing anti-racism work on/for ourselves is to build up our ability to withstand the discomfort we experience when learning more about racism, how white people still perpetrate it, and especially when we are made aware of our own racism. This discomfort has also been called “white fragility.” Dr. Robin DiAngelo, a white sociologist,

is known for her work on and published definition of white fragility. This is not to say that BIPAL people didn't have definitions for this or weren't talking about this long before DiAngelo published her books. They did and they were. But pop-culture (read here, white folks) started paying attention when DiAngelo began speaking about it. This is another way that racism functions. And we're naming it specifically here as another way to do anti-racism work.

Here's Rev. Michelle Ledder's paraphrase of DiAngelo's definition:

***White fragility**, a symbolic but very real line, over which when crossed, white people will exhibit a number of expected responses including but not limited to: anger, frustration, fear, sadness/tears, shutting down, walking out, or protective silence.*

(Don't worry – the “watch this” section will break this paraphrase down in sections.)

For now, the point is to focus on white people's work to build up resilience to our white fragility so that the line when our discomfort kicks in gets pushed out further and further and we can do more and more anti-racism work well and without stopping.

In the learning engagement for this section, you'll help to create a list of strategies you can use to build up your resilience to white fragility and learn why each action item is necessary for the work of anti-racism. Don't forget to print out/access the “Building Resilience to White Fragility” worksheet and have it ready before you begin the “watch this” section. Let's get started!!

“WATCH THIS“ SCRIPT:¹⁷⁷

Greetings, I'm Michelle Ledder, the Director of Equity and Anti-Racism at GCORR, the General Commission on Religion and Race. Welcome to SESSION THREE of Anti-Racism 101: Required Skills for White Allies Fighting Racism. This session focuses on how those of us who are white cannot do anti-racism work apart from doing anti-racism work for/with ourselves.

As a reminder: **Anti-Racism is the interrupting and/or dismantling of racism.**

For this learning engagement, you'll need to have ready the “Building Resilience to White Fragility” with you for use. You can either print it out or click the link to use the digital version. In this exercise, you will list specific actions to build your capacity for anti-racism work by building up your resilience to the discomfort that will inevitably come as you become more aware of the consequences of racism and your perpetration of it. In other words, this learning engagement will help you interrupt and dismantle your own racism.

Before moving forward, let's go over the definition of white fragility again and little bit slower.

MICHELLE: says paraphrase and breaks it down like in workshops

¹⁷⁷ A video version of this exists that can be included, replace this section, or given live during defense.

But just knowing what white fragility is – doesn't mean we'll know how to build resilience to it. So, for your first activity, using your worksheet, take 5 minutes and write down any specific thing you think a white person can do to build our resilience to white fragility.

Welcome back. Now, there's no way I can know what you've written but I can offer you 10 action items that help white people build our resilience to white fragility. Write the headings down on your worksheet. You can always watch this section again to reacquaint yourself with the details of each one as needed.

MICHELLE: top items from those gathered from workshops (name, describe, how it works)

Sometimes – lists aren't helpful because they allow us to keep distance between who we are and what we do. In this case, though, this list will help you live into anti-racism work precisely because you are doing anti-racism work yourself for/with yourself.

Review this list and re-watch this section enough times to be able to remember them by heading alone. Go to the “do this” section next.

DO THIS:

For session three, the big idea is that those of us who are white cannot do anti-racism work without also doing anti-racism work for/with ourselves.

REMINDER: Anti-Racism is the interrupting and/or dismantling of racism.

Building our resilience to white fragility actually is the work of anti-racism both internally and externally for those of us who are white. Building our capacity to do more and more anti-racism work before our discomfort stops us is part of interrupting and dismantling our own racism.

For session three, use your worksheet to do the following:

1. Look at the items you wrote in the first section and the 10 offered in the video. Which items are similar? Which are different? Discern/research whether any of those you wrote down add to the list of building resilience or actually reinforce racism. One way to do this is to think back to session one where you identified the differences between anti-racism, ignoring race/racism, and defending oneself/others against charges of racism. Do any items in your list defend yourself or other white people against charges of racism, even in subtle ways? Do all of your items interrupt or dismantle racism in a tangible way?

2. From the list of 10 (and any of your items determined to be anti-racist), choose 2 strategies that you will practice over the next month. Make a commitment to be on the lookout for times when your white fragility kicks in (or the white fragility of a fellow white person if the strategy is an intervention) and be prepared to act. Practice any role plays with another white person or in front of the mirror if that will help. Over the month, note when and how you have practiced these two strategies. At the end of the month, look over

your notes and analyze any resilience built, progress stalled, or challenges to be overcome over the next month.

3. Take note of times when your white fragility rises up within you over the next month. In what circumstances and with what people does this occur? Note your responses – did you freeze, did you exhibit your white fragility, did you enact a strategy to build resilience? Did you practice a strategy that wasn't one of the two you committed to?

4. After the first month, choose two more strategies you will practice. Every month continue those you are already practicing and choose two more to add to your skill set.

STRATEGIES FOR WHITE PEOPLE
TO BUILD OUR RESILIANCE TO WHITE FRAGILITY

- Interrogate my response to someone else's white fragility
- When considering intervening during another white person's white fragility, if a BIPAL person has already initiated "care" say, "Would you prefer I go and attend to this?"
- Considering impact of words or actions on PoC (precursor to white fragility)
- Listen to feedback/correction without responding in defense or further white fragility
- Submit to guidance of BIPAL people (interrogate resistance to the word, "submit" or "obey" in this item)
- Therapy – work it out with help
- Work through/experience white fragility without re-centering whiteness
- Attend to other white people who are experiencing white fragility without looking around for others, especially BIPAL people to care for them (sit by them, leave the room with them if necessary, etc.)
- AAA apology when called out on our own white fragility
- Take responsibility for our own white fragility and impact
- Active willingness to sit with our guilt and shame without expressing our white fragility
- Trust the wisdom of BIPAL people, and act like it, practice this
- Hold other white people accountable for their white fragility (and welcome them holding us accountable)
- Avoiding saying or using "I understand" language as it relates to racism – we don't
- Refuse temptation to force BIPAL people to teach us
- Listen to BIPAL people without engaging in protective silence
- Normalize the uncomfortable feelings of white fragility as part of doing anti-racism work while refusing to normalize the actions of white fragility

Chapter 4: “Woe to You Means Us: An Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Homiletic”

For those of us who are white and have committed to do the work of anti-racism, we must at all times, and in every place, remember that we are those to whom Jesus and the prophets addressed, “Woe to you!” We simultaneously benefit from the system against which we proclaim to fight. Our “both/and” racial positionality within the system of racism is that of the oppressor, even as we amplify our power to dismantle it, obey the strategies and guidance of BIPAL people, and do the work necessary for reparations. We never stand outside of the system from which we benefit; not as long as that system is still intact.

In the meantime, white preachers need a homiletic that utilizes a theology and pedagogy capable of recognizing our “both/and” status. White homiliticians have written anti-racism books marketed to help white preachers fight against racism while perpetrating racism within those very pages. What we need is an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Homiletic – one which fights against racism without perpetrating it. Again, this requires the homiletic to prioritize what seems a contradiction in terms: *fighting against* that from which we *benefit*. For this, we must start with an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology and Pedagogy.

An Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Homiletic, then, is one founded by an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology which reclaims the power of guilt and shame as theological goods for those of us who are white, firmly articulates a “both/and” racial positionality and the functions of whiteness, and reimagines responsibility within a Catalyst Grace both unconditionally available and conditionally accessed. Concomitantly, an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Pedagogy grounds preaching in a Pedagogy of the Oppressed which nuances

Freiere's conscientization model such that white people learn how to live increasingly and honorably into anti-racism work via a "both/and" banking and problem-posing education model in order to dismantle a system from which we still benefit. What is still needed, however, is the Both/And Anti-Racism Homiletic itself.

The following is a four-fold construction, originally formulated as a prophetic preaching homiletic including naming, challenge, repentance, and hope.¹⁷⁸ While each category will be discussed separately for clarity, it should be well noted that each of these areas is fluid, might overlap, and certainly end up ordered differently depending upon the context of circumstance and content. I learned this in real time when I taught these categories in a prophetic preaching course at Lee Arrendale Women's State Prison.

During the course, we talked about what it meant to preach prophetically, what freedom means inside and outside the prison, and each category separately. The women completed readings and assignments on each of the four categories before being assigned to construct and preach a sermon which included all four. I told them that because this was for the course, and our job was to help each other learn about how to utilize each of the four areas, they needed to use each area in their sermons, even though they might not always do that in the future. The women agreed, had no questions, and class ended. The

¹⁷⁸ This framework I first learned while taking, "Prophetic Preaching in the 21st Century" taught by the Rev. Dr. Teresa Fry Brown, Bandy Chair of Preaching at the Candler School of Theology during the Spring of 2008. The ideas within this homiletic template emerge both explicitly and implicitly from that course, the final paper I wrote for it, and resulting courses I taught for a theological certificate program in a Women's State Prison and a Youth Theological Institute at Emory University. I pray the work I have recited and created honors the original course material and take responsibility for ways I have misinterpreted or skewed it beyond its helpfulness.

next week, however, when the women preached their sermons, all I heard was hope, hope, and more hope. I was confused.

I thought we had come to an agreement stipulating they would use all four categories (naming, challenge, repentance, and hope). After hearing everyone's sermons, I shared with them my review. I told them I heard an abundance of hope in each of their sermons but barely heard the other three categories. That is when they taught me how my limitations as a non-incarcerated person hindered me. They explained that in the context of the prison there are significant consequences to naming, (especially) challenge, and repentance, but none to preaching hope. Thus, what they had done, instinctively, was to *use hope for all four!* They named through hope, they challenged through hope, they called for repentance through hope, and they offered hope through hope. "Hearing" their sermons through this lens, I could identify each of the four areas and was reminded again that though we might introduce information through distinct categories, the power of the Holy Spirit refuses limitation. It is in that vein the following four categories are presented separately.

Just as with Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theologies and Pedagogies, an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Homiletic need not start from scratch but must be nuanced for the particular context of whiteness and the system of racism. Prophetic preaching in its most rudimentary form contains the following characteristics:

- addresses the current injustices,
- alongside the biblical text,
- interpreted with an anti-oppression lens,
- for the purpose of building the kin-dom of God where everyone is free and whole.

To establish the Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Homiletic template, each of the four categories, naming/challenge/repentance/hope, will be described first as they relate to prophetic preaching in general. Subsequently, at both the explicit and implicit levels, Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theology and Pedagogy will undergird the nuanced categories for an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Homiletic.

Naming in Prophetic Preaching

Change needs both voice and power. Naming allows for issues and injustice as they currently stand to come before the people. Anything oppressive is exposed as sin and a desecration of God's will and God's way. Naming directly exposes the status quo and its techniques for hiding the ways current policies, practices, and procedures protect and perpetrate injustice. Naming brings forth speech and spaces for questioning the way things are such that they need not always be. Naming injustice both prepares and embodies the way which frees the spirits of people who are the direct targets of oppression as their experiences are validated externally and into time. Naming sees both oppression and the people who are oppressed.

Naming injustices is often how we demarcate preaching as prophetic. Speaking truth to power and preaching about the socio-political issues of the day creates the overarching umbrella categories describing the naming process but do little to describe the act. For prophetic preaching, generally, preachers can begin with these five categories.

Naming the Already – Naming the Not Yet

The Kin-dom of God has come to this world already, however, not in full. Consequently, we might see glimpses of the Kin-dom of God shining through the clouds of injustice: peace in the midst of injustice; reparations in the midst of harm; or wholeness in the midst of brokenness. The prophetic preacher remembers to name the glimpses of the Kin-dom even while simultaneously proclaiming challenge or repentance for oppression in the now.

Yet, the Kin-dom of God has not come in full. Obviously, with oppression, injustice, and pain in the world, the prophetic preacher must always be willing and able to name these realities. This naming refuses to euphemize details which distance us from the harm stemming from every expression of oppression and the consequences of unjust systems. Here, naming both expressions and systems which interfere with the Kin-dom of God being fully recognized and realized is the naming of sin.

Naming What People Can't See, Won't See, or Can See but Won't Say

Without intervention, people do not see our own privilege nor how we retain it at the expense of other people. The status quo only survives by making people believe “this is just the way it is.” People, especially those with privileges from the system, believe that everyone sees things the same way, that institutions treat everyone the same way, or that people get the same treatment as everyone else, precisely because the system tells us this is so. It is only when people hear/see a different perspective than their own they can grow aware of injustices or options for something different. The prophetic preacher is called to

help people see what they currently do not see by naming directly and specifically injustice, privilege, and oppression.

Sometimes people are aware of injustices or privileges but will not bring themselves to see them. Reasons for this are many. Perhaps it is too painful or shameful for them to admit. Some decide they will not give up the privileges they retain by remaining silent. Others cannot imagine another viable option. The prophetic preacher is called to name why it is imperative for us not to shy away from what we know.

People who find themselves newly aware of injustice, sometimes remain quiet. Silence, however, is the same as accepting the status quo and oppressive structures.¹⁷⁹ Sometimes people remain quiet because they are scared for themselves, their families, or the unpredictability of what change will bring. Others remain quiet because they are too stunned to speak. Others, still, because they are convinced they cannot do anything to change anything. The prophetic preacher is called to help people enact their voices for justice and amplify voices unheard or ignored by the current system and its people.

Naming Justice – Naming Hope

It is important for the prophetic preacher to remember to name glimpses and places of justice where they reside even in the midst of oppressive structures and expressions of injustice. Naming even glimpses of justice despite the seeming impenetrability of evil

¹⁷⁹ South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu made explicit that “if you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.” Desmond Tutu, *Oxford Essential Quotations*, 5th ed. (Oxford University Press, online version, 2017), accessed October 18, 2021. [Desmond Tutu - Oxford Reference](#).

encourages the reality that injustice is neither omnipotent nor omnipresent. The prophet further names this reality by offering examples of people, organizations, and systems which model the good.

At times the justice has not yet occurred, but the prophetic preacher can recognize glimpses of God's work where others cannot. Sometimes deep and soul-crushing defeats to justice work have the people believing injustice will indeed reign forever and ever, amen. The prophetic preacher cries out to God for help reminding herself and the people of the Divine Hope offered to us in the midst of trial or even despair.

Naming the Fluidity between Privilege and Oppression

Privilege: The ability of a person, organization, or structure to gather status, material goods, or access to that which is necessary for surviving or thriving instead of another person or group of persons.

Oppression: The existential phenomenon of a system of overlapping and interdependent policies, practices, procedures, and protections which privileges some at the expense and detriment of others.

The prophetic preacher must recognize the ways in which we can simultaneously live in the benefits of privilege and under the harms of oppression. For example, an African American woman is the direct target of oppression by a corporation who only offers its top executive positions to white men, but simultaneously finds privilege in other areas of her life due to colorism. A Latinx man experiences privilege from his college degree and

economic status of “upper middle class,” while simultaneously forced to provide proof of his U.S. citizenship without cause. A white woman is given the benefit of the doubt by police officers because she is white while simultaneously, she lives paycheck-to-paycheck working at Wal-Mart. The prophetic preacher must be on the lookout for the ways in which intersectionality¹⁸⁰ creates fluidity within hearers and herself.

Naming Progress – Naming Celebration

In justice work, it is easy to become overwhelmed by all that remains to be done.¹⁸¹ Prophetic preaching reminds both preacher and people that God is working even in the midst of injustice. In every glimpse of “justice despite,” is the progress of God and people as they follow and enact the arc of the universe.¹⁸²

The prophetic preacher, however, is not sentenced to a life of gloom and doom. There is a time for weeping, gnashing of teeth, and lament, as there is a time for celebration, even humor.¹⁸³ The prophetic preacher must be on the lookout for those times and share them

¹⁸⁰ “Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways. When it comes to social inequality, people’s lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other. Intersectionality as an analytic tool gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves.” Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality* (Malden: Polity Press, 2016), 193.

¹⁸¹ For more on what Rev. Dr. Teresa Fry Brown calls, Justice Fatigue, see “Surviving Justice Fatigue.” Teresa Fry Brown. “Surviving Justice Fatigue – Fall Convocation 2016,” [vimeo.com](https://vimeo.com/584848484), accessed October 18, 2021, video, [Teresa Fry Brown, “Surviving Justice Fatigue” - Fall Convocation 2016 on Vimeo.](https://vimeo.com/584848484)

¹⁸² “We shall overcome because the arc of a moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” Martin Luther King, Jr., “Remaining Awake through a Great Revolution,” *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, edited by James M Washington (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991), 277.

¹⁸³ For a homiletic treatment of the Spirit’s honoring of both lament and celebration see, Luke A. Powery, *Spirit Speech: Lament and Celebration in Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009).

with the people for uplift, recognizing the human spirit can only hold so much hardship and pain before breaking.

Challenge in Prophetic Preaching

Challenge stands up for the necessity of change refusing to allow people (or preacher) to avoid steps beyond naming. Preaching challenge states unequivocally that change is possible within people, institutions, and systems. Furthermore, challenge highlights the third option, often provided by God's own self. Here, challenge prepares the people for possibility within what seems to be an impossible, or impossibly stagnant, situation.

Stand for Change

While standing for change is an extension of naming, challenge describes the current state of things in such a way that people can begin to understand their responsibility as an agent of change. Challenge begins with the concrete realities of suffering or injustice found in our lives, neighborhoods, and worlds and states the way things are now is unacceptable.¹⁸⁴ Challenge finds ways both to address the reality of "contemporary crucifixions" but also to denounce them.¹⁸⁵ Challenge asks the types of questions that refuse to look at the Bible or our faith as "easy" answers to life's difficulties. Prophetic preaching which stands for change helps the people see and think about injustice differently.

Stand for the Possibility of Change

¹⁸⁴ Christine M. Smith, *Risking the Terror: Resurrection in This Life* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2001) 30.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 30-34.

After creating the types of descriptions to allow persons to see injustices where they could not before, and to feel differently about their role and responsibility to change them, prophetic preaching challenges us with practical possibilities. Paradoxically, practical possibilities often do not “make sense” standing in contrast to the oppressive system’s logic marketed as “common sense.” Challenge also stirs people’s desire to act. In this sense, challenge creates the preparatory environment where people begin to see themselves as actors within the realm of change, to imagine situations and themselves through the eyes of God’s coming Kin-dom, and to re-evaluate their understanding of themselves as those who see, think, and act differently.

Offer the 3rd Option

Challenge prepares the people for the possibility of what seems impossible or is unimaginable. The prophetic preacher presents and crafts biblically based narratives for people to see God’s challenges to God’s people throughout time in situations of hardship and oppression. Sermons create concrete connections between biblical narratives and current injustices; both synchronous and asynchronous as well as both linear and beyond past/future binaries. Challenge prepares the people to hear God’s call to action for them, beginning with repentance and moving toward struggle, commitment, and dedication.

Repentance in Prophetic Preaching

Prophetic preachers must offer an opportunity for authentic repentance. Repentance provides the space and time to move beyond the current injustices named, into a position where intent for change can become actualized. Repentance is the literal and required turning around from that which was; the pivot point between the status quo and justice.

Prophetic sermons which name and challenge without providing literal and symbolic space for authentic repentance about the process of change and discipleship.

Authentic Repentance Includes Both Words and Actions

A verbal affirmation of change or intent to change allows people to testify to God's work of transformation. Made in public, words which otherwise reflect only intent, become a form of accountability. For authentic repentance to occur, there must be a turning from sin which requires action of some sort. Action literally realizes intent. With verbal repentance, people declare their intentions by naming the change within themselves to share with others, who then can hold the person accountable to actualize intent with evidence. Action oriented repentance allows for people to live into their new lives and create the kin-dom of God here on earth. The prophetic preacher must offer opportunities for people to "do" what they say they "believe."

Repentance Calls Us All to Stand Within Those Guilty of Ism or Issue

Those guilty of sin in one area of life are many times those who are oppressed in other areas. Prophetic preachers must be self-aware and self-reflective of where we stand in both arenas. The fluidity between oppressed and oppressor is always greater than we first think. Prophetic preachers are not immune to standing within spheres of oppression even if they are different than those highlighted on any particular Sunday. In addition, there are times when those who have been oppressed respond by oppressing others. Prophetic sermons will shine the light of the Gospel on these tendencies in ways that represent God's will for a transformed kin-dom. Prophetic preachers must be willing to admit our own

complacency or active involvement in any oppression against which we preach: repentance is never only for the people.

God Offers Repentance to All – and All Means All

Prophetic preachers remember that God's repentance is available to all persons even those with whom we are angry, disappointed, and frustrated. Kin-dom justice and shalom invites both the lamb and the lion to lie down together without replicating the oppressions that created the unjust power differential in the first place. Restorative justice and Kin-dom shalom never minimize suffering, scapegoat anyone, nor does it expense anyone outside of God's love. Prophetic sermons teach and offer the kind of repentance that believes all people can be saved, healed, restored, convicted, repentant, regret-filled, transformed, and whole – because God does.

Hope in Prophetic Preaching

While naming is the first or only aspect often equated with prophetic preaching, hope might be the last. Prophetic preaching is often considered so focused on pointing out God's concern and anger about what is wrong that it eclipses God's provision and use of hope for what could be possible. Hope is the glimpse of justice in the midst of evil. Hope is the determination of resistance in the midst of oppression. Hope is the tear shed in the midst of apathy. Hope is the resurrection in the midst of death. Hope is prophetic preaching and preaching is not prophetic without it.

Hope Remembers the Good News of God is Actually Good News

While many times the prophetic preacher must remind people of the dire consequences of our actions, the Good News proclaims hope for change. The Good News of God announces to the world we do not have to be “stuck” in the problems or difficulties of life. The prophetic sermon is not complete until hope is proclaimed. This is true even if the hope comes in a second sermon or a later date. The Good News of God is the hope of freedom to those who have been direct targets of oppression. To those who have perpetrated oppression, though it does not feel good at the time, it is the hope of salvation.

Hope Remains in the Midst of Challenge
because the Goal of God is the Wholeness of All Creation

Even in the worst situations, the goal of God to make provision for all of Creation to become whole remains steadfast. God’s promises remain true in the midst of death, heartache, oppression, sin, physical ailments, war, and all forms of evil. In other words, in the face of anything that limits wholeness, God’s promises persist. Hope also remains in the midst of a challenge for a call to action. Thus, in the midst of a sermon where the prophetic preacher allows people to see what they have done, and what they need to be doing differently, we must remember to proclaim the hope that a new possibility is available by the grace of God.

Hope Can Serve as Naming, Challenge, and Offer of Repentance

In situations of severe dehumanization and oppression, rather than serving only one aspect of proclaiming prophetically, hope can function as all four. Proclaiming hope can serve as Naming by allowing people to see how desperate a situation has become. Basically, a naming of life in the midst of death. Similarly, proclaiming hope can serve as

Challenge by allowing it to stand in contrast to the current situation. In other words, the Hope of God challenges hearers to live beyond the drastic disparity between what is and what should be. Finally, proclaiming hope in these situations can serve as an offer of Repentance. In this way, hope allows people to see how God's offer of redemption is available always to everyone who turns away from ways of dehumanization and oppression to the healing ways of God's love.

Hope Frees Hearers to Act Differently

Proclaiming hope allows people to recognize how acting differently might be possible, even if for the first time. This might occur when providing the 3rd option or highlighting glimpses of disruption to seemingly omnipotent evil. Hope allows us to see what we have been 'saved from' in order to live out what we have been "saved for." Hope lifts us out of the despair of thinking, "It will always be this way." Hope says, "maybe" when all we have heard is "never." Hope says, "yes" when all we have heard is "no." Hope says, "possible" when everything around us screams, "Impossible!"

God Provides Hope for Both Immediate and Eschatological Change

God's hope is not limited to occurring after we die. God's hope irrupts into this life and this world in ways that transform us and the world around us. Actually, oppressors often say that change only comes in the afterlife to keep those who are oppressed in their current positions ("their place"). Hope defies this by breaking through the logic of the oppressive system. Prophetic preachers oblige hope by remaining careful to remind persons of the possibility of change even now.

Because God has offered humans free will, some things will not change in the here and now. Some persons will determine to live in ways that hinder or limit wholeness for everyone. In those cases, God's will wait until the fullness of time when all things will come underneath the umbrella of God's Kin-dom of Shalom. This justice-bearing peace ushers in eternity when all will be whole, healed, and reconciled to God and each other.

**An Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Homiletic for White Preachers:
Naming, Challenge, Repentance, & Hope**

For the purposes of prophetic preaching, a number of ideals, ideas, and strategies – including but not limited to those listed in this chapter – accomplish the goals of dismantling injustice, generally speaking. However, as specific as these strategies might be, when the goals of preaching are to interrupt and dismantle racism, and to provide the means by which those of us who are white preachers will construct sermons capable of doing so, the particularities of racism and anti-racism must be applied. Racial positionality creates distinct differences between the work of white folks and that of BIPAL people. Further, our position within the system of racism which privileges, prioritizes, and protects us demands certain responses. Those of us who are white must *both* comply with anti-racism strategies created or endorsed by BIPAL people *and* recognize the work of dismantling racism is ours – even as BIPAL people continue to do it due to our continued abdication of our responsibilities.

Therefore, an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Homiletic here will consider the four areas of the prophetic preaching model (naming, challenge, repentance, and hope) and filter them through an anti-racism lens. Included specifically within this lens sits the Anti-Racist

Anti-Racism Theologies of guilt and shame as theological goods and grace as *both* unconditional *and* conditional for those of us who are white. Finally, the Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Pedagogies of the Oppressor will guide each area toward an anti-racism homiletic that is actually anti-racist.

NAMING in an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Homiletic

Naming in prophetic preaching included the following areas: [1] naming the already/not yet; [2] naming what people can't see, won't see, and can see but won't say; [3] naming justice and hope; [4] naming the fluidity between privilege and oppression, and [5] naming progress and celebration. Naming in anti-racism directly relating to how naming functions in prophetic preaching, generally, includes focusing specifically on the injustice of racism, even in the midst of any intersectional anti-oppression work. Naming racism as sin must be accompanied by naming the work those of us who are white must do to interrupt and dismantle it. Naming exposes how the status quo protects the racism which informs it and provides its logic system. Naming racism and its consequences, and the necessity of anti-racism work for those of us who are white, prepares and embodies the ways in which we can interrupt and dismantle the system and all expressions of racism.

Naming is always important for sermons which attend to the realities of fighting against racism. Racism, both as system and in its expressions, is overarching, foundational, robust, and entrenched within our society and lives. Yet, there are some ways of naming that obstruct anti-racism, even perpetrate racism. The following describes a few of the ways those of us who are white can participate in naming within an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Homiletic which actually interrupt and dismantle racism:

- DO name the ways that guilt and shame are theological goods for those of us who are white. Name specifically how white people have specific pushback against the possibility of being guilted and shamed, especially in public, stemming from protecting ourselves from being embarrassed when called out on our racism. Name how guilt and shame can be used by God as divine course correctors to call us back to who we have been created and called to be: anti-racist.
- DO name the ways that grace for white folks is *both* unconditional *and* conditional. Name how premature calls for grace by those of us who are white actually perpetuate racism and attempt to quell feelings of discomfort white people feel as we become more aware of our perpetration of racism and its consequences. Name how God wants all of us – including all white people to come to a true repentance and back to our full Image of God-ness (unconditional grace). However, for those of us who are white, we cannot access God's gift to make it happen until we enact the works of anti-racism (conditional grace). Otherwise, we will appropriate the moniker of ally or anti-racist without doing the work necessary for it to be true.
- DON'T appropriate the progress and celebration of anti-racism work done by BIPAL people – it is not ours. Name how those of us who are white are not the heroes of this story nor are we the direct targets within the system of racism. Name, instead, we are always in the status of the oppressor as long as it remains in existence, in that we cannot step outside of the system of racism. Combine these two ideas naming how white people must do the oppressors' work to dismantle the system from within while refusing to steal "wins" fought for by BIPAL people.

- DO name how the kin-dom of God is already here but not yet in full. Name how the system of racism is still fully in place institutionally and continues to harm, even fatally, BIPAL people. Name how those of us who are white have the responsibility to do anti-racism work so that the kin-dom can be realized more and more – even to the extent the kin-dom **cannot** be realized in full until racism is fully dismantled. Naming, here, can also include how white people thwart the fulfillment of the kin-dom of God when we avoid anti-racist anti-racism work.
- DO create sermonic strategies to increase white people's ability to see our obliviousness to the realities and expressions of racism. Name explicitly how the system of racism “makes sense” to us and our whiteness because it was built to do so. Prepare sermons capable of naming how those of us who are white continue to turn our face away from the suffering that racism causes (here, one might refer back to the ways that despair can either make us freeze, ignore suffering, or turn toward God for help). Name specific examples of how seeing but not acting against racism still perpetrates racism.
- DON'T name the fluidity between privilege and oppression without also emphasizing the realities of the momentum of racism to re-exert itself in a white dominant system/organization. Name how the tidal wave of momentum of racism, in general, and how it functions in white dominant spaces, specifically, will eventually overcome any anti-oppression work that does not highlight and focus on anti-racism. Name specifically how white people must learn more about intersectionality and apply it to anti-oppression frameworks while simultaneously centering the interruption and dismantling of racism within that framework.

- DON'T name justice and hope as a way to avoid actually doing the work of anti-racism. While hope, as will be discussed later, can serve as an anti-racist anti-racism strategy for those of us who are white, it can also be used to solidify the racist status quo, to delay or defer anti-racism work or outcomes, and to pacify activists.¹⁸⁶ Name justice and hope as a way to sustain the momentum of work already started. Amplify the continued need for white people to avoid the temptation to give up and the possibility those of us who are white can (eventually) redefine what it means to be white.

CHALLENGE in an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Homiletic

Challenge in prophetic preaching included the following areas: [1] stand for change; [2] stand for possibility of change; and [3] offer the third (3rd) option. Challenge in anti-racism that directly relates to how challenge functions in prophetic preaching generally, includes focusing on the necessity of interrupting and dismantling the system and all expressions of racism. Preaching challenge within an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Homiletic states unequivocally that change IS possible within white people and white dominant institutions, and the system of racism itself can be dismantled. Preaching challenge prepares white people to believe in the impossible possibilities necessary for imagining and constructing new systems and ways of being free of racism and white supremacy.

¹⁸⁶ "Why do we have a winner? Hope... Hope... it is the only thing stronger than fear. A little hope is effective. A lot of hope is dangerous. A spark is fine, as long as it's contained." You Tube, "Hunger Games – Hope Quote," March 15, 2012, accessed October 18, 2021, [The Hunger Games - "Hope" Clip - YouTube](#).

Challenge is always important for sermons which will attend to the realities of fighting against racism. Racism, both as system and in its expressions, is overarching, foundational, robust, and entrenched within our society and lives. Yet, there are some ways of challenge that obstruct anti-racism, even perpetrate racism. The following describes a few of the ways those of us who are white can participate in challenge within an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Homiletic which actually interrupt and dismantle racism:

- DO challenge white people to focus on the outcomes of our actions instead of our intentions. Challenge the notion and strategy that a white person's (good or naïve) intention trumps the consequences or outcomes of our actions/inaction. Challenge those of us who are white to resist the urge to explain our intentions when we are called out on our racism. Challenge approaches which rely on or center white people's intentions to dictate anti-racism strategies, focus, or responses to racist actions/inaction.
- DO challenge the belief, and thus strategies which follow, that white people's hearts and minds must be transformed before the work of anti-racism begins. Challenge the notion, specifically and unapologetically, that anti-racist anti-racism work cannot be done until the hearts and minds of white people are changed. Challenge decision-makers to take an "action-first-while" approaches to anti-racism work with white people. Create action plans and interventions which can be started now and for which accountability structures are established. Challenge the belief that all white people must agree on problem and strategy before engaging in anti-racism work. Name that when transformation of white folks' hearts and minds are placed before accountable actions of interruption and dismantling racism, it is the

most stubborn heart and mind which dictates the timetable, content, and strategy for anti-racism work.

- DO challenge white people to act like racism is unacceptable. Challenge white people to refuse to give into the temptation that we must understand everything upon which we act. Challenge white folks to remember the logic of racism is based in whiteness and is created to make sense to us. This also means that the logic of anti-racism is not set up to make sense to us, and thus, we will sometimes be implementing strategies of anti-racism which seem illogical or wrong in the moment. By starting with the assumption that racism is unacceptable, sermons are primed to offer challenges which sit outside of what seems possible or plausible to those of us who are white.
- DON'T allow for any challenge that relies on the lie that racism would not be a problem anymore if we/everyone just loved Jesus more. Challenge should never rely upon churchified language that is true in general but reifies racism in the face of racism. Preachers must challenge themselves to remember that we can never be the arbiter of how much someone loves Jesus. Rather, challenge within an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Homiletic must hold firm to the realities that standing for the possibility of change remains firmly tethered to possibilities that can be enacted (even if they seem impossible by human standards!).
- DO seek the third option that God is providing for white people to do anti-racist anti-racism work. White preachers must always challenge ourselves (and be steadfastly open to the anti-racist challenge of BIPAL people) to seek, preach, and enact the third option which cannot be thought of, enacted, or attained by anything that has gone before. Challenge white preachers and white people to realize that

we are often not the people who will be capable of recognizing or imagining the third option. This, by its very nature, will also challenge our implicit and explicit beliefs in the white supremacist notion that, as white people, we are always capable of the best solution.

(This last sentence might challenge the white reader right now. Those of us who are white can see this as an opportunity presented by Challenge to interrogate our need to push back on the assumption that we believe we are always capable of finding the solution. Interrogate also our resistance to even the idea that our implicit or explicit beliefs are rooted in white supremacy.)

- DO challenge any form of racism expressed in public. Those of us who are white must find anti-racist ways to challenge any racist assumption, stereotype, expression, policy, language, question – whether individual or institutional expression – when perpetrated in public. Challenge resistance to “calling white people out in public” because of a false interpretation of Matthew 18:15.¹⁸⁷
- DON’T allow for opposition to anti-racism work from those of us who are white to stall anti-racism work. Remain committed to challenging people to enact and live most fully into anti-racism work but do not entertain every form of resistance to it. Questions must not become distraction techniques and distancing techniques camouflaged by white people as our desire “to understand” or “to do it right.”

REPENTANCE in an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Homiletic

¹⁸⁷ Matthew 18: 15-17a “If your (sibling) sins against you, go and correct them when you are alone together. If they listen to you, then you’ve won over your (sibling). But if they won’t listen, take with you one or two others so that every word may be established by the mouth of two or three witnesses. But if they still won’t pay attention, report it to the church.” Texts like this are often highlighted by those of us who are white when we want to ensure we are corrected for our racism in private. However, much of the racism we perpetrate is done in public. I am arguing that a text which encourages us to speak one-on-one in private to someone who has sinned against us does not apply to that which has occurred in front of others.

Repentance in prophetic preaching included the following areas: [1] repentance includes both words and actions; [2] stand with those guilty of ism or issue; and [3] God offers repentance for all – and all means all. Repentance in anti-racism that directly relates to how repentance functions in prophetic preaching, generally, includes specifically the nature of repentance that is both a literal and required turning which must include actions. Preaching repentance within anti-racist anti-racism sermons theologically declares that all white people are capable of being regret-filled, transformed, and whole because God does. Repentance will offer opportunities for authentic change – including but not limited to the transformation of hearts and minds. After naming the realities and the challenges those realities need not always remain in place, the anti-racist anti-racism preacher and sermon creates tangible spaces and strategies for repentance to occur and of which to avail oneself.

Repentance is always important for sermons which will attend to the realities of fighting against racism. Racism, both as system and in its expressions, is overarching, foundational, robust, and entrenched within our society and lives. Yet, there are some ways of preaching repentance that obstruct anti-racism, even perpetrate racism. The following describes a few options for those of us who are white to participate in repentance within an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Homiletic which actually interrupt and dismantle racism:

- DO make connections between God's use of guilt and shame as divine anthropological course correctors capable of leading those of us who are white to recognize our need for repentance of our racism. Also, remind white people of our

need to act upon a “both/and” form of grace which is simultaneously conditional and unconditional. Offer connections between Catalyst Grace and a public form of repentance that is accountable for follow-up actions which interrupt and dismantle racism.

- DON'T create spaces for those of us who are white to use repentance language as a way to separate ourselves from “those other white people.” Repentance should point directly to the person who is enacting it and the ways in which that person has acted outside of their God-created and God-called self. In anti-racist anti-racism sermons, options for repentance should include and model language that focuses on how white people take responsibility for perpetrating racism, versus how we are not like others who do. This includes refusing the temptation white people have to admit we “used to” perpetrate racism and now do not, which boasts a lie rather than repentance.
- DO emphasize how actions literally realize intent. Repentance for racism is never completed by words alone. Nor do particular acts of anti-racism, while the system of racism remains, fully satisfy repentance. An anti-racist anti-racism repentance for white people should include strategies for us to enact the interruption and dismantling of racism. Any repentance that is offered in word during a church service is seen as the beginning (maybe even the pre-game) to the ongoing work of anti-racism that must accompany it in order for it to enact repentance for racism.
- DON'T equate white people's repentance with no longer benefiting from the system of racism. For those of us who are white, we ARE NEVER OUTSIDE OF THE SYSTEM OF RACISM; thus, we must always stand and identify with those who are guilty of racism. It matters not what type of work or study we do, with

whom we are in relationship, with whom we have children, our children's racialized identity, what anti-racism we have already enacted, or how many times BIPAL people have explicitly or implicitly considered us an ally. We do not stand with those guilty of the ism generally as humans who sin. White people are always privileged, prioritized, and protected by the system of racism which we also perpetrate intentionally and otherwise. Furthermore, white preachers and homiliticians must refuse to place ourselves outside of continual repentance even as we call for that of white people-at-large.

- DO create language, strategies, and opportunities for white people to repent of our racism based not fully in cynicism (even if some exists) but in the theological hope that God believes all people can be saved, healed, restored, convicted, and repentant.
- DON'T create repentance opportunities while secretly believing you are the only white person who does not need it, that some other white people are inherently incapable of the miracle of repentance, or that repentance is only offered to those who deserve it. Even if reality and experience show some white people increasingly and consistently resistant to opportunities to repent (resistance is real, look at Pharaoh, Exodus 7:14-11:10), it is not the job of the anti-racist anti-racism preacher to make that judgement for someone else or for God. Meaningful anti-racist anti-racism preaching will concentrate on opportunities for repentance that emerge from the biblical text, from religious ritual, from who is gathered and engaged, and from divine leading of the Holy Spirit. Without having to waste energy and precious time on those who have decided to rebel, repentance can still be offered in ways that create the option for a miraculous turn around if that occurs.

HOPE in an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Homiletic

Hope in prophetic preaching included the following areas: [1] Hope remembers the Good News of God is actually good news; [2] Hope remains in the midst of challenges because the goal of God is wholeness of all creation; [3] Hope serves as naming, challenge, and repentance; [4] Hope frees hearers to act differently; and [5] God provides hope for both immediate and eschatological change. Hope in anti-racism that directly relates to how hope functions in prophetic preaching, generally, echoes the five introductory aspects already listed. Specifically, hope provides a glimpse of justice in the midst of racism both as system and expressions. Hope is the determination of anti-racism in the midst of racism. Hope is empathy revived. Hope is the resurrection in the midst of death. Hope is anti-racist anti-racism preaching and anti-racism preaching is not anti-racist without it.

Hope is always important for sermons which will attend to the realities of fighting against racism. Racism, both as a system and in its expressions, is overarching, foundational, robust, and entrenched within our society and lives. However, there are ways that even hope is co-opted by white supremacy and white preachers to perpetrate racism, sometimes, while proclaiming to enact anti-racism. The following describes a few of the ways those of us who are white can participate in preaching hope within an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Homiletic which actually interrupt and dismantle racism:

- DO proclaim hope by emphasizing the form of despair that leads us to God for help beyond ourselves. The despair “which leads to life” turns those of us who are white toward the realities of racism, the necessity of our ongoing repentance, and the

capability for anti-racism work. Create specific connections between despair and God's scaffolding of anti-racism work and how hope shows up in the world.

- DON'T proclaim hope as a way to sugar-coat the realities of harm racism enacts. Work aggressively to refuse to whitewash the testimonies of racialized terror BIPAL people share with us or through media/print. Avoid, at all costs, the temptation to distance ourselves from the feelings of guilt and shame that accompany white people as our awareness of our complicity and perpetration of racism increase.
- DO proclaim that the hope of anti-racism in the midst of racism will feel and be experienced differently for BIPAL people and white people. For those of us who are white, hope will not "feel good" even as it rests within the Good News of the Gospel. Whereas for BIPAL folks, the opposite is most likely true.¹⁸⁸
- DO proclaim hope as a non-negotiable connection with God's goal of wholeness of all creation. Proclaim a divine form of hope that never negates the realities of racism and its veritable host of consequences. Proclaim, also, hope's provision of possibilities for those of us who are white to repent for our racism, do anti-racism work, and to become whole ourselves.
- DON'T forget to teach how naming, challenge, and repentance can also serve as proclaiming hope during a sermon. Remember how the women who live/d at Lee

¹⁸⁸ Jesus preached differently and was received differently by religious leaders, disciples, and those excluded. Because of the social-political positionality of each of those groups, and the power they wielded or oppression they suffered, the Good News of the Gospel did not feel good to everyone. Rather, for those who were challenged because of the harm they did to others, the Gospel sounded wrong, even blasphemous, and was negatively received. Those who heard the Gospel as that which would heal their maladies, include them more fully into society, or amplify them in power or stature, experienced the Good News positively and as good. Smith, *Risking the Terror*, 74-75.

Arrendale Women's State Prison innately did this very thing.¹⁸⁹ As white preachers, we should proclaim hope, even in violently confrontational systems which deem all forms of resistance as rebellion to be punished. Offer hope by doing the following:

- DO use naming the realities of racism as a way to amplify the experiences and testimonies of BIPAL people often ignored or glossed over. Also use naming to share the names and testimonies of other white people who have done/are doing anti-racism work deemed valuable by BIPAL people.
- DO use challenge as a way to showcase the hope that an anti-racist anti-racism system of church, schools, work, governments, policies, practices, ideas, values, and actions is possible. Use challenge to highlight examples of how God is providing “a way out of no way” (3rd option).
- DO use opportunities for repentance to provide the hope that those of us who are white can be transformed into those committed to anti-racism, that systems of racism can be dismantled, and that new systems (perhaps those not even thought of yet) can be created and sustained when those of us who are white repent in meaningful, tangible, and powerful ways.
- DON'T offer hope that equates white people's comfort with the boundaries of anti-racism work. DON'T allow whether white people feel good about ourselves to determine the content, strategies, or timeline of anti-racism work. DO normalize calling out racism and provide hope by emphasizing the necessity of addressing racism head on and the “what to do instead” options immediately following. DON'T

¹⁸⁹ Example in full found on pages 148-149.

offer false forms of hope that center Christian politeness that covers for avoiding racism and its consequences.

- DO proclaim examples of hope through anti-racist anti-racism that can be enacted right now (church militant) and the belief that anti-racist anti-racism is the assumptive foundation for the kin-dom of God (church triumphant). DO emphasize that even when we do not see examples of immediate hope, that God is working toward an eschatological hope that can use ANYTHING for good. Remember to avoid any hints of God creating racism in order to bring about the good. DO proclaim the ways that hope shows up, in glimpses of immediate anti-racism, even when the system of racism seems like it is more powerful than God's ongoing work of justice.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The academy and the Church need an anti-racism homiletic capable of confronting, reforming, and revolutionizing white preaching. White homiletics and its preachers must repent for the ways in which we have kidnapped, raped, and tortured the Good News of the Gospel to serve the god of whiteness. Then, finally, liberated from its sins of compliance, silence, and the status quo of white supremacy, white preaching will finally be capable of providing white people a liberating option *from* the god of whiteness and *for* the work of anti-racism.

While many white homileticians now recognize the deep need for anti-racism homiletics, often we replicate racism and its dangerous consequences. Rather than disrupt and dismantle racism, these homiletics reinforce racism in deeply insidious ways. For example, a white preacher who reads these texts with a commitment to putting their intentions for anti-racism to action, unwittingly finds within its pages expressions of racism disguised as anti-racism. Racism, encoded with theological sounding-talk and a distorted hint of anti-racism, is free to deploy an ever-widening company of soldiers to weaponize the Good News of the Gospel. Rather than white preachers resisting its spread, many of us become its most faithful disciples.

An analysis of the methods and methodologies of the current anti-racism homiletics written by white homileticians revealed an idea which has been presented as a truth which cannot be challenged nor disputed. The philosophical tautology, “white people are good,” is protected at all costs and the theological and linguistic gymnastics required to do so enacts and protects a wide range of racist ideas, tropes, practices, and mandates. Herein

lies the problem: as long as the philosophical tautology of “white people are good” remains, no anti-racism homiletic can do the work of anti-racism and, thus, be a true anti-racist anti-racism homiletic.

A literature review revealed that, at the very least, the intention to write an anti-racism homiletic by a white homilician does not prevent racism perpetrated there. No matter the level of explicit naming of racism, even as sin, each homiletic written by a white person perpetrated racism. After a content and anti-racism strategy summary, a detailed description of the racism perpetrated followed. In each instance, the expressions of racism enacted connect either directly or indirectly to protecting white people’s goodness or attempts to protect our feelings about falling short. This occurred, despite the diversity in anti-racism strategies or the racism perpetrated. If naming racism directly, even as sin, was not enough to exorcise it from anti-racism homiletics written by white people, what was needed to do so? To construct a homiletic, capable of interrupting and dismantling both racism and an uncontrolled urge to protect white people’s goodness, this project looked to constructing an anti-racist anti-racism theology and anti-racist anti-racism pedagogy to ground its efforts.

Articulated Context Theologies provides the backdrop for an anti-racist anti-racism theology capable of interrupting and dismantling racism, even from that of an anti-racism homiletic. “Before I Preach, I A.C.T.” first centered the realities of racism and how it functions. While all people can hold racialized prejudices, the system of racism was created and is sustained to benefit those of us who are white at the expense of BIPAL people. Thus, an Articulated Context Theology for Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Preaching

must relate directly to the specific context of white people. Specifically, how white people benefit from our racism while we simultaneously attempt to interrupt it, proclaim a desire to name our racial privilege while we simultaneously attempt to protect it, and are more afraid of being exposed for our racism than to risk dismantling it. Such a task also required an articulating of whiteness as particularity and our racial positionality as the context from which we, white folks, perpetrate racism.

As a foundation for reimagining theology in both content and function, three Articulated Context Theologies came to the forefront: William Cavanaugh's *Torture and Eucharist*, Serene Jones' *Cartographies of Grace*, and Andrew Sung Park's *The Wounded Heart of God*. Cavanaugh's work served to highlight how the Church might reclaim aspects of theology forgotten and surrendered. Jones' work provided a template for prioritizing the universal nature of God's love alongside the particularities of identity positionality and its social-political consequences. Finally, Park's focus amplified how sin affects differently the oppressor and people who are oppressed while creating a necessary pedagogical bridge for an A.C.T. capable of honorably addressing both.

Emerging from there, an anti-racist anti-racism theology of responsibility for white folks demands that we reclaim guilt and shame as theological goods. We should not allow the Church's indolent use of guilt to prod parishioners to serve on committees or to exert a selfish misuse of shame to ratify oppression into doctrine to guide us. Rather, guilt and shame can be reclaimed as gifts from God to help humans find our way back to who we have been created and called to be. A divine course-correction, guilt and shame teach us through our souls (or consciences) the things we do that veer us further and further away

from who we are. We do not consider guilt and shame through the lens of that which makes us despair in ways that paralyze white people to ignore racism or defend ourselves against charges of racism. Rather, we are opened to the reality that God can use guilt and shame to drive us to God, who gives us the will and capability to interrupt and dismantle racism – beginning but not ending with our own.

For an anti-racism theology to be anti-racist, white folks must also accept as necessary the realities of racial positionality. We do not navigate the world the same as do BIPAL people. The world is racialized by hierarchies, created and maintained by white supremacy. Our whiteness protects us, privileges us, and prioritizes us. The system of racism teaches and allows those of us who are white our entitlement to access resources, opportunities, and trust is unlimited. Our primary sin from this positionality is the over-entitled self. We must engage a preaching theology which names specifically the context of our over-entitled selves and what it means for us to come back to right relationship before God and with others, including those we harm by the system and our own racism.

A theology which seeks to be both anti-racist and to articulate white folks' racism, must reimagine a grace that is paradoxically *both* unconditional *and* conditional. Catalyst Grace, similar to prevenient grace, surrounds those of us who are white with an unconditional divine gift, which seeks to return us to our humanity and relationship with God. Yet, with the way racism works, white folks continue to benefit from the system of racism even while we fight against it. Catalyst Grace requires deep repentance. It holds white people accountable for the consequences of the system of racism and our own, as well as responsible to interrupt and dismantle racism in tangible ways. A divine gift,

simultaneously conditioned and unconditional, seems impossible. Yet, this is exactly the type of “both/and” grace required for white people who commit to anti-racism work; otherwise, we will steal the moniker of anti-racist with none of the work required of it.

An Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Pedagogy for white people, like a theology of the same, must address our need to interrupt and dismantle racism while we still participate and perpetuate it. Audre Lorde’s incisive instruction that the master’s house cannot be dismantled with the master’s tools creates the very real possibility that the one who lives in the master’s house will not see or question the master’s tools, is not capable of imagining the benefit of new tools or how new tools are not “too dangerous,” and will refuse to use the new tools because they were created by those without the sanction of the master’s house.

Moreover, oppression reasserts itself as oppressors appropriate resistance strategies meant for those directly oppressed within that system. Thus, it is imperative that those of us who are white take precise precautions to honor the original content and audience of social justice pedagogies not created for us. By considering each aspect of Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* for its applicable wisdom for those of us who are white, as well as the dangers when appropriated, A Pedagogy of the Oppressor emerged.

Consideration of Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, through its authentic contextual lens of direct targets of oppression, allowed us to extrapolate a pedagogy of the oppressor. Despite their overlapping nature, the four discrete areas of Freire’s model were used to brainstorm how each relates to and informs the oppressor as to our work within a

problem-posing model. Each area considered as critical the “both/and” positionality of the oppressor as one who benefits from the oppressive system even as we attempt to interrupt and dismantle it.

At the **realize/perception** stage, the oppressor will experience something negative; a taking away. As we are able to see the system as created and not normal or natural, we simultaneously come to realize we have benefited from a system specifically created at the expense of others. We must overcome the urge to explain away our unearned privileges as that to which we are entitled. As the system of oppression, and our power within it, becomes less assumed as logical and more transparent, the oppressor increasingly must come to terms with what it will mean, specifically, when it is interrupted and dismantled.

The **critique/reflection** stage requires the oppressor to question how the system used to detriment others has been privileging, protecting, and prioritizing us. We must be on the lookout for how our positionality as the oppressor within this system will align our experiences with the status quo and hide the realities and leverage of the oppression. We must responsibly include the experiences and perspectives of those who are oppressed so that our own obliviousness is revealed. Skilled teachers in the problem-posing method will craft questions for us to examine critically circumstances which create interventions into the system’s (and oppressor’s/our) logic and unearned privileges.

When oppressors enter the **imagine/conscientization** stage, we find ourselves for the first time required to confront how we, ourselves, must take responsibility for our unjust comfort and priority within the system of oppression. We must defy our instincts to

protect or defend our over-entitlement which steals unearned benefits at the expense of those directly oppressed by it. Even to dream of a new way, requires the oppressor to internalize and to implement the level of risk only possible when we take responsibility for our role in oppression. Depending on whether we choose to protect ourselves, defend ourselves, or take responsibility, we will obliterate/obscure the possibility of dreaming anew, replicate the oppressive system with “good” intentions, or imagine the new despite what we must pay back and repair.

Finally, the oppressor must have internalized our responsibility to interrupt and dismantle the same system which benefits us in the **action/commitment-praxis** stage. We must participate in the overthrowing of the system by honoring the agency and obeying the leadership of those who are the direct targets of oppression. We utilize our unique dual role as both insider and disruptor of the system to dismantle the system without replicating it. We fight our deep urges to take over for people who are oppressed and never engage the lie that we are liberating them. We intentionally override what we have been taught: that we know what is best. We must engage our intentions in tangible action (as deemed necessary by the people who are direct targets of the oppression) that interrupts and dismantles the oppression from which we continue to benefit.

Utilizing the pedagogy of the oppressor directly in terms of creating an anti-racist anti-racism pedagogy, alongside experiences teaching anti-racism workshops for GCORR, the following list of strategies for white people and learning engagements emerges:

- White people must internalize our racial positionality as non-negotiable.

- Consider negative feelings as necessary to anti-racist anti-racism work for white people.
- White people building our resilience to our white fragility in honorable ways, otherwise it's racist.
- Question how racism privileges, protects, and prioritizes white people to the detriment of BIPAL people.
- Compensate BIPAL people for the intellectual and emotional work they do from which white people learn.
- Recognize it is always the responsibility for white people to build trust across lines of racial difference.
- White people shifting our thinking and language from “sharing what we have” to “repaying what we stole.” (plus, interest)
- Refuse to rely on intentions and only focus on our impact/outcomes.
- White people participate in the overthrow of the oppressive system in racially positioned ways.
- As the oppressor, those of us who are white must engage a “both/and” pedagogy: a hybrid problem-posing and banking model.

Completing the anti-racist anti-racism pedagogy are two learning engagements which highlight areas necessary to anti-racism work and add aspects of the pedagogy of the oppressor which makes them anti-racist. First, an exercise to transform a “safe-space” covenant into an anti-oppression covenant to be used as an agreement among people trying to do anti-racism work together. Second, a learning engagement amplifies the

necessity of white people building our resilience to white fragility in order to do any anti-racism work. Moreover, as it highlights racial positionality, white people are challenged to build our resilience while BIPAL people are invited to build their resistance to it.

Having both an Anti-Racism Anti-Racist Theology and Pedagogy constructed, provides the opportunity to use them as interpretive lenses through which to create an Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Homiletic. To begin, a prophetic preaching model including naming, challenge, repentance, and hope was created. Naming allows for issues and injustice as they currently stand to come before the people while bringing forth speech and spaces for questioning the same. Naming injustice both prepares and embodies the way which frees the spirits of people who are the direct targets of oppression as their experiences are validated externally and into time. Challenge states unequivocally that change is possible within people, institutions, and systems all the while highlighting the third option, often provided by God's own self. Repentance provides the space and time to move beyond the current injustices named, into a position where intent for change can become actualized Prophetic sermons which name and challenge without providing literal and symbolic space for authentic repentance about the process of change and discipleship. Finally, hope is the glimpse of justice in the midst of evil, the determination of resistance in the midst of oppression, and the tear shed in the midst of apathy. Hope is prophetic preaching and preaching is not prophetic without it.

The particularities of racism and anti-racism, now applied to prophetic preaching categories allow for the goals of preaching to interrupt and dismantle racism and to provide the means by which those of us who are white will construct sermons capable of

doing so. Racial positionality creates distinct differences between the work of those of us who are white and that of BIPAL people. Further, our position within the system of racism which privileges, prioritizes, and protects us demands certain responses. Those of us who are white must comply with anti-racism strategies created or endorsed by BIPAL people and recognize the work of dismantling racism is ours – even as BIPAL people continue to do it due to our continued abdication of our responsibilities. Anti-Racist Anti-Racism Theologies of guilt and shame as theological goods, grace as *both* unconditional *and* conditional, and a pedagogy of the oppressed resulted in twenty-nine specific anti-racist anti-racism homiletic strategies to complete the chapter.

Since this project serves only to introduce the “both/and” anti-racism homiletic model, though, more specific and detailed future work could include a book-length anti-racist theology (from ch2); a book length anti-racist pedagogy (from ch3); a co-written project with BIPAL people to examine an anti-racism homiletic for churches, classes, or coalitions across lines of racial difference; a “how-to” teach anti-racism homiletics with practical resources and learning engagements; or an article linking anti-racist strategies with strategies on how to deal with narcissists.

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